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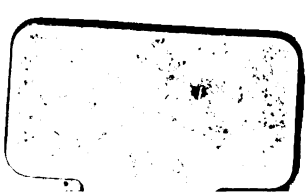
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SPEECHES

OF THE LATE

Right Honourable

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

(SEVERAL CORRECTED BY HIMSELF.)

EDITED BY

A CONSTITUTIONAL FRIEND.

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SPEECHES

OF THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

APRIL 26, 1798.

BILL FOR SUSPENDING FOR A LIMITED TIME THE OPERATION OF THE HABEAS-CORPUS ACT.

MR. SHERIDAN expressed his entire disapprobation of the bill, and his wish that it had not been urged with such violent rapidity as marked its motion through the other house, and which he anticipated would also become its career through this house. The last great and best privilege was trial by jury: any efforts of any administration that checked its attributes, or diminished its virtues, was a death-blow to the vitality of constitutional liberty. This was a privilege which, of all others, he was most tenacious of, and which, of all others, was most valuable to the political eminence of Englishmen. He could not then permit the bill now proposed to pass through the house, without thus, in the most rigid, decided, and unqualified manner, giving it his most positive negative. He could not, when he lent his warmest aid in approbation of every measure to be adopted to resist the common enemy, at

the same time, and the very same instant, give his approbation of a measure, the operation of which would retard, check, and damp that vigor requisite to meet and confound that common enemy. To resist with effect the common enemy, there must be unanimity: but the effect of this would be to sow discord, to excite murmurs, and to feed discontent. When a measure similar to this, on a former occasion, was introduced, he used the same arguments that he should apply now. He desired to have evidence before the house of the existence of treason, and of traitorous conspiracies, before he gave a ready acquiescence to that which in its operation involved so many. The measure introduced now required still more urgently the application of the same arguments. He, therefore, again required evidence of conspiring traitors, of treasonable correspondence, of seditious societies; until these were adduced, he would never give his consent to the bill then before the house. He should consider himself performing but a lukewarm duty to his conscience, or to his country, if he did not express himself to this effect; but he should do a violence to both, if he did not resist it with every faculty which God and nature gave him to enjoy.

The right honorable gentleman opposite to him seemed to welcome his co-operation in the general system of national welfare, and to infer from thence, that he was to expect his support, thick and thin, of all his measures; but he took occasion to remark, that as, in the general principle of united opposition to foreign invasion, he entertained but one and the same wish with that right honorable gentleman and the rest of his colleagues; yet, in the specific transaction of his ministerial conduct, he never coincided with him, and never would. This he desired might be universally understood. He took occasion to remark, that the period when this measure was before introduced, was when a set of persons were ready to be put upon their trial; the same was precisely

the case now. But even at that period there was more abundant reason for the house to adopt such a measure than at the present; for at that time there was such evidence for their guide as the secret committees of the two houses of parliament; but now even that pretext is not forthcoming, nor a shadow of proof offered, that any kind of treason existed that could warrant the adoption of so violent a means to restrict the liberty of Englishmen.—There was nothing good, nothing wise, nothing just or prudential in it, and nothing that could sanction for it his support. The right honorable gentleman, then, failing to adduce any evidence to authorize the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, either at the former period to which he alluded; or now, it remained for him to inquire, whether there existed any proof, or any demonstration, sufficient to supersede the necessity of suspending it at this time. He thought he could produce argument to such an effect; and for that purpose he had only to submit to the house the very reasoning used this day by that right honorable gentleman. He stated, in very glowing language, "the prevalent spirit of opposition that reigned among the people of this country to French principles, their unanimity to resist French arms, and the universality of both opposition and resistance in maintaining against all invaders the inviolability of their constitution, their liberty, and laws." He, therefore, confessed, when he heard such assertions issue from that right honorable gentleman, he could not but conceive and believe that such a measure as that submitted to the house was, if not nugatory, at least unnecessary. He desired to know, where was the necessity of oppressing a willing people? By the declarations of the right honorable gentleman himself, unanimity prevailed; one sentiment, one spirit, one soul, seemed to actuate the people (and he believed it). Then where exists the necessity of imposing upon them a law, which, if not oppressive, must be useless and

unnecessary? For his part, as he could observe no proofs of its necessity, as he could find no reason for its utility, and until he saw either, or both, it should have in every stage his negative.

Mr. Pitt having replied,

Mr. Sheridan said, he wished to act on principle, and not on confidence; the minister said, he knew the existence of a conspiracy, and admitted that he (Mr. Sheridan) did not know it; how then could he vote for this measure otherwise than upon confidence? He was told, indeed, that the French themselves had published their intention of invading this country, and that they trusted to the aid of traitors here; he did not think that much credit was due to that assertion; for the French themselves had stated, that they would be joined in this country by all the friends to parliamentary reform. Taking that as a specimen, either of their judgment or veracity, there did not seem to him to be much reliance due to either. Indeed, he thought the Chancellor of the Exchequer expected too much, in expecting him to have no will of his own, after he had assented to the motion for the address this day. He was most clearly of opinion, that this country ought to be well prepared to meet the enemy—it ought also to convince the enemy it is prepared. That could be done only by raising the spirit of the British people, to shew their dignity. In his opinion, to deprive them of so material a bulwark, as the Habeas Corpus Act, was not the way to do either; for such a measure would only spread discontent among themselves, damp their spirits, and lessen their dignity, in the view of foreign nations.

The question was put that the bill be read a first time.—Ayes 183; *noes* 5.

MAY 8.

SOUTHWARK ASSOCIATION.

Mr. Tierney moved, "That this house will, upon this day se'nnight, resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to take into consideration the manner in which the 'Act to enable His Majesty more effectually to provide for the defence and security of the realm during the present war, and for indemnifying persons who may suffer in their property by such measures as may be necessary for that purpose,' has been carried into effect in the county of Surrey."

Mr. Dundas spoke in opposition to the motion.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, it had a little excited his surprize to hear the right honorable gentleman acknowledge the importance of the present question, and yet treat it as if it was of no importance at all. In my mind (said Mr. Sheridan), in point of real importance, as it connects itself with the best interests of the country, in a crisis avowedly of real danger, than the present, there could not have been brought forward a question more entitled to the candid, full, and deliberate consideration of this house. Yet so satisfied am I with the statements made by my honorable friend, and so ably has he supported those statements by his arguments—arguments which have scarce been combated, but certainly not refuted, that I should not have troubled the house at all but from one observation made by the right honorable gentleman in the course of his speech. Sir, the right honorable gentleman has this evening told us, nay, he has asserted it broadly as a proposition, which, indeed, he has offered to maintain, that there are in this country great numbers of seditious persons, who have formed themselves into societies under the specious title of Reformers, but whose real object is to overturn the constitution by assisting the French, should they ever land in this country. This, Sir, is in truth, a very broad proposition; and, without intending any thing ludicrous, I must confess its capacity was not a little enlarged by the tone and gesture in which it was delivered.

But the right honorable gentleman cannot wonder if I deny assertions so generally made, and propositions so wide and unlimited in their scope. I am now told there are every where insidious lurking persons, who cherish sentiments hostile to the government. This is an accusation by no means new. It is, however, much too loose and vague to be regarded with complacency. I will admit that there may be in this country, as there ever will be in every country, a few, who, urged by I know not what spirit, a love of change—a passion probably once cherished by the right honorable gentleman himself—or from worse motives, desire the overthrow of the government. But while I am far from doubting that there may be bad men, I hope and believe they are few. It is with them, perhaps, as with the grasshopper—they will make a noise, but have too much timidity ever to be seen. Only alarmists could apprehend danger from such men. But we have often before now heard it stated in language not less confident, than in every corner of the kingdom sedition and treason in some degree exist. This, Sir, is a little unaccountable. If His Majesty's ministers have not been all along deceiving us, it is not easy to imagine how, in this crisis of their mighty power, a few obscure individuals could have become so formidable. Really there is in these matters something of the mysterious. A short time back, so much of the constitution was taken away to defend the rest; and for this proceeding the reason stated by ministers were chiefly, that the societies were every day growing dangerous; that principles hostile to good order and morality were hourly gaining strength, and rapidly gaining on the individual mind. Strong measures were accordingly adopted; and, until of late, we have been uniformly told, that the memorable treason and sedition bills had succeeded in effectually suppressing whatever of either existed in the country.—But this night we are told, that not only has the

distemper re-appeared, but treason and sedition are denounced to you: and the right honorable gentleman has declared that they exist in a degree to damp the spirit, and repress the ardor of the country.

Here Mr. Dundas said, he must have been much misunderstood. What he said was, that in consequence of many improper persons having made offers to serve, and the appearance of a seditious faction, the spirits of the people, and of the associations, would be damped if lords lieutenants of the counties, or if His Majesty's ministers, accepted of such offers of service.

Mr. Sheridan then said—We have now had the right honorable gentleman's explanation; and, I must say, that if the people, if the martial spirit of the associations, shall be damped by so small a number as the troop of seditionists is said to consist of, the country is, indeed, in danger, and our situation is bad beyond example. There is that, however, in the declared zeal and patriotism of the great body of the people, which must quiet every rational mind, and make the general scrutiny depend, as it ought, on the courage, the perseverance, the resources, and the unincumbered strength of the country. Thus much I have endeavored to obviate the effect of that discouraging proposition—that there exist at this moment vast and formidable bodies of men hostile to government, and united to accelerate its fall.—But there is one expression, which it is impossible I should be able to contemplate without anxiety, or bring forward to the recollection of the honorable gentleman without regret. The right honorable Secretary has told us that he regrets the circumstances which have obliged the officers of the crown to put off the state trials; and do but attend to the very mischievous reason he has assigned for his regret—that he could not lay before this house the proofs of the guilt of particular bodies, and of the existence of multiplied conspiracies. Sir, I am not one who has ever been unwilling to pay the tribute of applause justly due to an English jury? but if ever

any thing could tend to influence a jury, it must be such an assertion as that of the right honorable gentleman. In the critical and awful situation of the persons in confinement at Maidstone, nothing can be more unkind, to say the least, than the using expressions towards them which may have a tendency to impress individual minds with an unfavorable opinion of their conduct. That principle of the law of England which holds a man to be innocent until he is found guilty by a jury of his peers, to my mind conveys as sound and wise a maxim as ever was inculcated. Sir, it requires of us cautiously to avoid all occasions of expressing hastily, or in warmth, even doubts of the innocence of persons who may unfortunately stand accused of enormous crimes. If the right honorable gentleman had but given that principle of our law its full weight in his deliberations, if he had regarded any thing that he owes to justice, he would not have made such a speech. But, Sir, I can remember a period in our annals, characterized by circumstances not a little similar, and conduct very much like that of the present evening. The memorable epoch of the state trials is fresh in the recollection of gentlemen. To this I particularly allude. At that period, eventful enough, God knows, we were assured by the right honorable gentleman, and his friends near him, that the whole country was menaced, and in danger of being over-run by French principles, and the emissaries of the Corresponding Societies. I remember the proceedings of parliament in the committees that were held on this occasion. Then, Sir, there were tremendous reports, whispers of dark and insidious conspiracies, of treason, and every other monstrous crime that could interest or disquiet the mind. We were then presented with profiles, and drawings of pikes, and of male and female screws. It was then the general boast of ministers, that they possessed proofs of existing conspiracies; but they, at the same time, modestly told us, as has been insi-

nuated this evening, they regretted, that while the trials were depending, they could not bring forward the proofs of existing conspiracies, of the treasonable mind within, and the corresponding danger from without. Happily, however, these auguries soon proved ill founded, and the verdict of an English jury declared the innocence of the accused. I do not say that the right honorable gentleman opposite to me thinks much of the verdict of a jury; but it is no unimportant fact, that the Judge who presided on that occasion, congratulated the jury on their verdict, and on the proofs that had been exhibited of those conspiracies, which once so much alarmed the public mind, being wholly without foundation, or only the chimerical offspring of a faction; men without arms, ammunition, or means of any kind, and even without zeal. Sir, I must think we are on the present occasion as little in danger of being overwhelmed with conspirators as we were then. But, though I think thus, the inference from the right honorable gentleman's observation must be obvious. It must be felt, that in substance the right honorable gentleman had insinuated that the prisoners are guilty. I have no knowledge of any of the prisoners except Mr. O'Connor; but I, Sir, regret that the trial at Maidstone was put off. I regret it for reasons very different, with feelings the reverse of those which appear to actuate the right honorable gentleman. I regret it, Sir, because I am convinced Mr. Arthur O'Connor is not a traitor, and is incapable of acting hostilely against this country or its constitution.—Having said this, I shall now take the liberty of making some observations on the question immediately before the house. The right honorable gentleman has assumed, as a general proposition, the discretion vested in lords lieutenants; but all servants are responsible for their conduct. The whole question is, therefore, this—"Has my honorable friend made out such a case as ought to induce this

house to enter into the proposed inquiry, and as requires a justification of the conduct of my Lord Onslow?" I think this case has been made out; but so far from the right honorable gentleman meeting the question fairly, he has not in any one instance attempted to discuss it. Instead of this, a great deal of the right honorable gentleman's speech was occupied with efforts to throw odium on the resolutions of the borough of Southwark, which all comes to this—"It is fit to tell the French, that England is not what England was?" But, Sir, it was not necessary that these resolutions should ever have been passed, to give the French all the information on this subject they can desire. They cannot think it necessary to refer to the borough of Southwark to inform them, that we entered into the present war strengthened by an alliance with almost every power in Europe, that we have lost our allies one by one, that Belgium is annexed to their republic, and that we have sustained great and grievous losses in the West Indies. It is complained of, that these resolutions have become too public, and they would find their way to France. Sir, I do not know that this will be the case; but I do know, that if the declarations of the Borough Association reached France, no candid or intelligent Frenchman will doubt the determination of that portion of His Majesty's subjects to defend their country, and assert their rights against invaders, of whatever description.

But it appears to me, that language such as that held by the right honorable gentleman, is every way unworthy of himself. At one time the thirst was after unanimity; now we are threatened with schisms; and if ever any thing serious to this country should be the effect of party animosity, that right honorable gentleman, and those who like to vex and wound the spirit of individuals, will be alone to blame. It, indeed, is pretty evident, that no offer of service, no declared intention to support the executive government in the hour of peril, no

oblivion of political enmity, will do, unless we come forward to declare the present war just and necessary, although we had, in its commencement, and have uniformly since, opposed it as unjust and unnessary; that we must deny all our cherished and oldest principles; acknowledge those ministers to have capacity, whose incapacity we always have deplored; in fine, unless we bring along with us a certificate of our capacity, it appears to be the determination of His Majesty's ministers that we shall not serve our country, or be found in its ranks, fighting its battles in the hour of danger. I do not state this on light grounds. In my neighbourhood, instances have occurred of conduct on the part of ministers that warrant my conclusions. An honorable gentleman, a member of this house, than whom there is not a more loyal, gallant person in it, has made an offer of his services, but no notice has been taken of that offer. The whole of his political proscription can, therefore, only mean, that certain persons shall not be trusted with arms because they have opposed ministers. The right honorable gentleman says, that the resolutions of the inhabitants of the borough of Southwark tend only to invite the French to come and give them the fraternal-hug. But so little do they express a desire to receive the fraternal kiss, that the resolutions breathe a true English spirit; they contain expressions of undissembled love of their country, and tell the French, "if you come, we are determined to repel you with all our might." The right honorable gentleman has asserted with great boldness (I need not expect candor on that side of the house), that the motives of many persons who had offered their services were very questionable, and that the resolutions passed in the borough had not a tendency to produce unanimity. With respect to the last, the contrary of this is evident. And to hear men who have never been supported but from parsimonious motives, who have been buying at their price all that have ever es-

poused their cause—to hear these men question the purity of motives is surprising. They habitually, if not naturally, ascribe those qualities to others which they know they inherit themselves. With respect to the tendency of the resolutions, I shall say once for all, that if I was an inhabitant of the Borough, attending at the meeting in which those resolutions were adopted, and there should come into the room a man who should state, that it had been said in the house of commons, that all reformers were friends to the French, and regarded as such by that people, the determination to resist them, expressed in one of their resolutions, would be to me the best proof that no such intention as that of assisting the French was ever entertained by the inhabitants of the borough of Southwark. From all these considerations, Sir, I must say, I think it not candid or prudent in ministers to shrink from this discussion, and refuse inquiry. I think they owe it to themselves; I know they owe it to their country.—Mr. Sheridan concluded with saying he heartily approved of the present motion, and would cordially vote for it.

On a division there appeared—for the motion 22; *against it* 141.

JUNE 19.

STATE OF IRELAND.

A message from His Majesty was delivered on the 18*th, and this day Mr. Dundas moved, "That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, to return His Majesty the thanks of this house for his most gracious message: To assure His Majesty, that, while we deeply regret that the machinations of wicked men have induced any of His Majesty's subjects to commit acts of rebellion against His Majesty's government, we at the same time feel the highest satisfaction that this occasion has afforded a fresh proof of the zeal and ardor for the service of their country which has ever distinguished the militia of this kingdom: That, conceiving it may be of the utmost importance, for the protection of His Majesty's loyal subjects in Ireland, for the speedy and effectual suppression of the present rebellion, and for the general defence of the British empire, that His Majesty should avail*

himself of the voluntary offers of service which have been made by several regiments of militia, we will immediately enter into the consideration of such provisions as may be necessary for enabling His Majesty, for a time, and to an extent, to be limited, to accept the services of such militia regiments as may wish to be employed at this important conjuncture."

Mr. Banks moved an amendment, That the latter part of the address, giving the consemt of the house to the militia being sent to Ireland, be left out.

Mr. SHERIDAN—The motion which has to-night been submitted to the house is the most extraordinary in its nature that ever was heard within these walls; and the manner in which it has been brought forward, is to the full as extraordinary. Long as the house has been inured to be treated with contempt by the King's ministers, the mode in which they have been treated on the present occasion, is even more insulting than any thing they have yet experienced. The right honorable gentleman who moved the address, seems to have considered the measure proposed as one to which no objection could possibly be framed; and he introduced it as one which demanded neither apology nor explanation. I confess, that the subject should be viewed so much as a matter of course by that right honorable gentleman, does likewise a little surprise me. We cannot forget how lately the right honorable gentleman came down to this house, and stated the country to be in a state of imminent danger, which required the exertion of every heart and hand for its defence. It is, indeed, extraordinary, then, that after telling us of the danger of the crisis, after all the regular troops are sent out of the kingdom, and when twelve hundred more cannot be found, he should call upon the house to give their consent to strip the country of the militia forces on which it relies for its defence. We have not been told how this drain is to be supplied, what new securities are to be provided. All this the right honorable gentleman considers as a matter of course, which he is neither called upon to reconcile to former statement,

nor to defend upon any ground of constitutional principle, or sound policy.

The right honorable gentleman who followed upon the other side, was at no greater pains in his short speech, to give any argument in support of the measure proposed. And what is this extraordinary measure intended to gain? From the lords' bill it appears, that the militia force which it is thus intended to send to Ireland is only twelve hundred—[Here Mr. Sheridan was informed that the number was to be twelve thousand.]—But if such an additional force is wanted, why not send all the regular troops which are to be found, before the constitutional principle is violated? Why not send the two thousand of the guards in town, and, instead of twelve thousand, send only ten thousand? And if these twelve thousand are sent, are you sure that this will do? Will you continue to send more of the militia to Ireland, without any assurance that the danger, late so alarming, is removed; or without being informed where you are to look for defence?

The right honorable gentleman who spoke last, began his speech with saying, that nothing like an argument had been advanced on this side of the house worthy of serious confutation; and the right honorable gentleman, however, continued to make a pretty long and warm reply to these no-arguments. It has been asked, what would have been thought of ministers if they had concealed the offer made by the militia? If ministers could have done what they now propose without consulting the house, I will venture to say, that we should have heard nothing of this offer. Just as they have continued to send all the regular force to Ireland upon the King's prerogative, without ever acquainting the house of the object, or asking its advice with regard to the measures which it was necessary to pursue, they would have acted. The advice of parliament would have been despised, and ministers would have proceeded upon their own discretion. Although

they may hold in contempt the advice of this house, they were not quite bold enough to act in violation of the law, which they are afraid, and which I hope will still be found too powerful for them. They required the consent of the house, and it was necessary to apply for its sanction. Never was there a word of rebellion in Ireland mentioned; never was the least communication made, on which the house could offer its advice, till its consent must be obtained to one of the most unconstitutional measures that ever was brought forward in parliament.

The right honorable gentleman, who spoke last, in replying to the no-arguments which had been used on this side of the house, fastened on an expression of my honorable friend, that he would not vote a single shilling, nor agree to send a single man to Ireland, for the purpose of subjugating the oppressed people of that country. Is it then unconstitutional? Is it unparliamentary language for a member of this house to say, that he cannot give his aid to any system of the executive government, till he has examined and approved of the grounds on which they are justified? Does the right honorable gentleman remember what Mr. Burke said in his letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe?—and I hope the authority of Mr. Burke will not be less in his estimation than when he was confirmed by his sentiments, and animated by his example. In the letter to which I allude, Mr. Burke says, that the house of commons will never enter into a war for the conquest of Ireland without knowing the grounds of the quarrel. This, then, is what my honorable friend requires. He desires to know the ground of the quarrel, and this he thinks an essential inquiry before the house ought, either directly or indirectly, to give its sanction to any system of measures, or contribute its support to carry them into effect. The right honorable gentleman expresses a doubt, whether at all we are willing to give our support to extinguish rebellion in Ireland. I am aware that

the right honorable gentleman is desirous to lead us into slippery ground. He shall not, however, betray me to be guilty of any indiscretion. When he accuses us of being desirous to withhold our aid in the extinction of that rebellion, I would ask him, whether he means to say, that in every case this house is bound to side with a king of Ireland, and an Irish house of commons, against the people of Ireland? Will he maintain that proposition generally? Will he, without directly apostatizing from every opinion he ever held, deny that cases may occur in which it would be impossible for this house to give their support on that side? Suppose that the Irish parliament were to re-enact all those horrible statutes by which the people were oppressed, and absolutely reduced to the condition of brutes, would this house be bound to support the Irish legislature against the people in such a quarrel? If the parliament of Ireland were to enact torture by law, if it were to state as necessary, and establish in practice, bastiles, arbitrary imprisonments, ignominious punishment without conviction, transportation without trial, and a series of oppression too degrading, too tyrannical for human nature to endure, would the British house of commons be bound to support the Irish legislature against the resentment which such proceedings had provoked? Merely because the men who resist such oppression are called rebels, and those who oppose them are called the king's troops, must this house, at all hazards, support the Irish legislature? Unless the right honorable gentleman is prepared to retract every opinion, which he ever entertained upon similar subjects, he cannot affirm that this house, in such a state of things, has but one line of conduct to pursue. This house is not bound to sanction the injustice, and to strengthen the oppression which the legislature of the sister kingdom, however independent, might be pleased to inflict. This much I say generally, because I am unwilling to refer to the particular events of the

present time. I think, however, I have said enough to shew that it becomes this house gravely to inquire what is the nature of the quarrel in which it is called upon to engage, and what the grounds on which its support is demanded. I am ready to declare that every effort ought to be exerted to prevent Ireland from falling under the power of France; but this is a point totally different from the merit of the struggle to which we are required to become parties. One honorable gentleman has thought proper to assert, that the rebellion in Ireland is not only unprecedented in its nature, but he has stiled it wholly unprovoked, and ventured to affirm that every measure of conciliation was employed to avert it. It was, indeed, with the utmost wonder and surprise that I heard this assertion advanced. What, when conciliation was held out to the people of Ireland, was there any discontent? When the government of Ireland was agreeable to the wishes of the people, was there any discontent? After the prospect of that conciliation was taken away—after Lord Fitzwilliam was recalled—after the hopes which had been raised were blasted—when the spirit of the people was beaten down, insulted, despised, I will ask any gentleman to point out a single act of conciliation which has emanated from the government of Ireland? On the contrary, has not that country exhibited one continual scene of the most grievous oppression, of the most vexatious proceedings; arbitrary punishments inflicted; torture declared necessary by the highest authority in the sister kingdom next to that of the legislature? And do gentlemen say that the indignant spirit which is roused by such exercise of government is unprovoked? Is this conciliation? is this lenity? Has every thing been done to avert the evils of rebellion? It is the fashion to say, and the address holds the same language, that the rebellion which now rages in the sister kingdom has been owing to the machinations of "wicked men." Agreeing to the amendment

proposed, it was my first intention to move that these words should be omitted. But no, Sir, the fact they assert is true. It is, indeed, to the measures of wicked men that the deplorable state of Ireland is to be imputed. It is to those wicked ministers who have broken the promises they held out; who betrayed the party they seduced into their views, to be the instruments of the foulest treachery that ever was practised against any people. It is to those wicked ministers who have given up that devoted country to plunder; resigned it a prey to this faction, by which it has so long been trampled upon, and abandoned it to every species of insult and oppression by which a country was ever overwhelmed, or the spirit of a people insulted, that we owe the miseries into which Ireland is plunged, and the dangers by which England is threatened. These evils are the doings of wicked ministers, and applied to them, the language of the address records a fatal and melancholy truth.

But if gentlemen are not disposed to take these words as understood by me, let them look back at the circumstances, and see whether they can discover any cause adequate to the effects which we behold. Let gentlemen look back to the period when a whole people, under the government of Lord Fitzwilliam, exhibited the most fervent and sincere loyalty, and say whether they can discover any cause for the change which has taken place. After being betrayed, duped, insulted, fooled, disappointed in their dearest hopes, and deprived of the government on which they could confide, and again thrown into the hands of the rulers they detested and despised, was it impossible that they should feel emotion of indignation and discontent? Every man in the house too well recollects the subscription set on foot in London, under the auspices, I believe, of Mr. Angerstein, in order to collect money for the support of industrious manufacturers in Ireland, wholly without employment, and

destitute of the means of subsistence. Of this description there were from thirty to forty thousand men in Ireland. By the produce of charitable subscription, twenty-five thousand a week were, by the scantiest benefactions, prevented from being famished. Such was the situation of so many unhappy individuals; and when charity was wearied out, unable any longer to supply their wants, it was not the poison of French principles, but the want of bread that seduced them. It was not their desire to be Frenchified, but their reluctance to be famished, that wrought upon them to make new attempts to escape from their misery. This was the true cause that made them a prey to seduction; and with one so satisfactory before our eyes, why need we seek to impute their conduct to the poison of French principles, a cause so inadequate to the effect?

This much I have thought it right to say in defence of those who think it necessary to inquire into the grounds of the quarrel between the government and people of the sister kingdom. I now return to the measure before the house. The right honorable gentleman denies that the militia could be intended in any shape as a counterbalance to a standing army, because it is the prerogative of the crown to reduce the militia at pleasure. I should really have expected, that upon such a question, the right honorable gentleman would have argued on some information upon the subject. The right honorable gentlean has proved himself completely ignorant of the constitution of the militia. The King can neither increase nor diminish the number of the militia. Each county supplies a certain number, and can neither have more nor less than its quota. It has been said that the service is voluntary, but I contend that it is not. The case of the fencibles is mentioned as in point, but nothing can be more different. The fencibles are raised on certain conditions between the individuals authorized by ministers and

the men who enlist; nor is it surprising that these engagements should be violated by those who have shewn themselves incapable of adhering to any contract, or being faithful to any engagements. The militia, however, was on a different footing. The militia was raised, not by a contract between individuals, but on a compact of law. It is in vain to talk of a thing being voluntary where no real opinion is left. The case of the worthy baronet (Sir L. Palk) is a proof of this. He finds himself in the whimsical situation of being a *volunteer* without knowing it. It reminds me of the story of the people who were dragging a man along, and on being asked the reason, gave for answer, that it was a volunteer they were carrying along with them. It had been said, that the resolution of the honorable gentleman and the worthy baronet, who have expressed their determination to follow their corps wherever they go, is a proof that they are not compelled. The motive from which they act, however, is submission, not consent. They go, not for the reason given by the right honorable gentleman, but for the reason assigned by themselves, that they would not desert the brave men with whom they served. What, indeed, is the mode employed to collect the disposition of a regiment respecting its going to Ireland? They are called out on the parade. Every man watches the looks of his neighbour; he is afraid to refuse assent at a moment when suspicion is so ready to fasten on the most indifferent things. With aching hearts, with reluctant minds, without any thing of sound will and real consent, they are dragged into the consent, which is falsely called voluntary; and these are the men who are considered as fit corps for resisting rebellion in Ireland. The comparison of the voluntary contributions was perfectly exact. To the measure of voluntary contributions I was friendly, and I was sorry to see it assume, in any degree, the appearance of compulsion. I did not like to hear of regi-

ments called out to be asked whether they would give up a week's pay, and of ships' companies brought on deck to subscribe their contribution. The mischiefs of a deliberate army have already been forcibly represented; a deliberate army may become an addressing army; and an addressing army a dictating army. When the principle is once violated, there are no mischiefs to which it may not extend.

We are now called upon for our last military stake, the militia; and it is natural to ask where we are to look for defence? Is the danger to which the public attention was so forcibly directed, less now than it was? Before the trials at Maidstone took place, we were informed by a right honorable gentleman opposite (Mr. Dundas) that dangers of the utmost magnitude existed. The promised communications on the subject, however, have not yet been received. Are we to understand, then, that the Habeas Corpus was suspended without any sufficient cause; or do the danger which then existed still threaten to assail us? Have ministers fairly and impartially weighed our situation, and knowing, as all the world must have known, the state of Ireland—the number of troops in that quarter, and the probable demand for new reinforcements, have they taken the precautions for supplying the drain of men, and providing such means of defence as our situation afforded? This they have not done. They called upon the spirit and the exertion of the country; they called upon men to forget their political divisions, and to unite in the great object of the national defence. Many of those who had been in the habit of opposing ministers shewed a zealous disposition to support the great object of national defence. In many cases this spirit had been answered by a behaviour highly discreditable to ministers. Under symptoms of apostacy from every principle men had previously entertained, their services were rejected. To the signs of dissent

which the right honorable gentleman exhibits, I say that the association formed in the borough of Southwark, is a proof of this assertion. For another proof of it, I have only to look at an honorable friend of mine beside me (General Tarleton). It would be superfluous in me to say any thing in praise of his courage and military talents. This country, all Europe and America, can bear testimony to his merit. My honorable friend candidly and manfully offered his services wherever they could be employed. They were rejected, however, with contempt. And does any person suppose, that if my honorable friend had been in the habit of cringing to ministers, he would have remained unemployed? Indeed, to the surprise of the enemy, and to the astonishment of the country, his services have been rejected, merely because he remained faithful to the political sentiments he has entertained. Religious distinctions, too, have been kept up, distinctions which, when the situation of the Pope is considered, any belief in his supremacy would not have rendered very formidable. Some time ago, when I proposed that a certain oath, required to be taken by those who serve His Majesty in a military capacity, should be omitted in favour of Roman Catholics, the motion was rejected. Brought forward partially on another bill by an honorable gentleman (Mr. Wilberforce) it succeeded; and was rejected on another attempt to extend it to dissenters. Another instance of this spirit occurred in the behaviour of ministers to Lord Petre. That nobleman had been at the trouble and expense of raising a corps of Essex Rangers. The commission, by which this corps was to be commanded by Lord Petre's son, was refused to be signed, because that gentleman was a member of the Whig Club. Perhaps this offer may have since been accepted, and the circumstance of difficulty cleared up. There are other instances, however, in which the same spirit has been displayed by ministers. A noble duke (Bedford), of great

character and influence, desirous to exert that influence in such a manner as might strengthen the country at the present difficult crisis, had, upon the most liberal terms, under the sanction of the Lord Lieutenant, raised a corps of four hundred and fifty volunteers at Tavistock, in Devonshire, which was to be united to a corps of one hundred and fifty which previously existed. These men were to be cloathed and paid at the noble duke's own expense, and the men were raised, and every thing arranged. Every thing was prepared—when at a meeting of the Whig Club, the noble duke having said, that an honorable friend of his, not now present, was more meritorious from the animosity which ministers had testified against him; from a newspaper report of this speech, the services of the noble duke were rejected. A letter was sent by the right honorable gentleman opposite (Mr. Dundas), commenting upon that sentence in the speech, and arguing that a person who held such language was unfit to be entrusted with any command. Upon this pretext the services of the noble duke were rejected. Surely ministers, while they act in this manner, check the spirit of coming forward in the defence of the country, and deprive it of the assistance of many who are zealous in its cause, and neglect those precautions of security which the drain of troops to Ireland has rendered necessary. To keep Ireland against the will of the people is a vain expectation. With eighty thousand troops with arms and discipline, against an unarmed and undisciplined multitude! Is it not clear that the contest lies between the government and the people? Without reversing the system, therefore, Ireland, as the phrase is, cannot be saved. The struggle is one, not of local discontent and partial disaffection, but it is a contest between the people and the government. In such a state of things, without entering into a particular enquiry, the fair presump-

tion is, that the government is to blame. He concluded with concurring in the amendment.

The house divided; for the amendment 47; against it 118. The original address was then put and carried.

JANUARY 23, 1799.

UNION OF IRELAND WITH GREAT BRITAIN.

On the 22d of January the following message was delivered to the house:—"His Majesty is persuaded that the unremitting industry with which our enemies persevere in their avowed design of affecting the separation of Ireland from this kingdom, cannot fail to engage the particular attention of parliament; and His Majesty recommends it to this house to consider of the most effectual means of counteracting, and finally defeating, this design; and he trusts that a review of all the circumstances which have recently occurred (joined to the sentiment of mutual affection and common interest) will dispose the parliaments of both kingdoms to provide in the manner which they shall judge most expedient, for settling such a complete and final adjustment as may best tend to improve and perpetuate a connection essential for their common security, and to augment and consolidate the strength, power, and resources of the British empire." On this day Mr. Dundas moved the usual address.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose and said, Sir, I must frankly declare that I am not of the same opinion with the right honorable gentleman, who thinks that there is nothing more necessary on the part of His Majesty's ministers than to move a mere address, returning the thanks of this house for His Majesty's most gracious communication. The subject is too important lightly to be passed over in any stage of its progress, and the interests that will naturally come into discussion too vast to be bounded over with an unreflecting rapidity. Not one man in the country would be free from reproach, if he could regard with apathy, or with an ease of temper approaching to indifference, a question that at once involves every thing dear to Irishmen, and which ought to be dear to every subject of the British empire. As I cannot view these matters wholly with unconcern, I must think that more is necessary on the part of His Majesty's ministers than merely to move an address of

thanks. I say, Sir, I cannot be of this opinion, because when I found it stated that it is the principal object of the message from the crown to invite the commons of Great Britain to the consideration of means of finally adjusting the interests in common between Great Britain and Ireland, I am naturally led to enquire how the terms of the final adjustment made and agreed to by the parliaments of the two countries, in 1782, came to fail of their object. In that year there was an adjustment; and no man acquainted with the history of that period, no man whose study has not been confined to mere local occurrences, can have forgotten in what kind of circumstances that adjustment arose, and under what kind of auspices it was made final. Nothing can be more obvious than the propriety of inquiring at this time how that adjustment failed of its object. The right honorable gentleman, adopting the language of the message, has assumed that the house is already in possession of the facts and arguments on which are to be founded the policy, justice, and expediency of agitating at this time such a discussion; in this way telling the whole world that the final adjustment ratified in 1782 was not a final adjustment in point of fact, but an adjustment to be held final at the pleasure of the English government. But there are no such things in the possession of the house as the materials from whence to reason that it is now either politic, expedient, or just, to come to the discussion of this question of final adjustment. Hence before ministers recommended to the house of commons to take measures that lead inevitably to the discussion of some plan of union, it was incumbent upon them to have shewn us that the last pledge of the English parliament to the people of Ireland, by which their independence was recognized and their rights acknowledged, has not produced that unanimity, that concord of sentiment, and earnest exertion to promote their own welfare, while they cordially and sincerely manifested their zeal for the

happiness and prosperity of this country, which that people were expected to display, and which the parliaments of the two countries sought to cherish.—But more than the effect immediately upon the people, it is fit to inquire whether the final adjustment led to the measures of mutual confidence, and produced that unanimity of sentiment and object in the two parliaments, which, for the happiness and honor of both kingdoms, every man wished might be its permanent effect. Sir, I think it impossible for any man clearly to shew that there has been any want of this unanimity on any important occasion. I am the more strongly impressed with this belief, because a solemn declaration of the Irish parliament, sanctioned by all Ireland, is now on record, wherein we have it emphatically stated that the independence of Ireland will be asserted by the people of Ireland, and that their parliament is an independent legislature. The recollection of this declaration brings to my mind the strong apprehension of the danger, the peril of agitating anew the question of Irish independence. What has that declaration stated? Sir, it is a manly, firm, and honorable testimony to all time, of the proud, noble spirit of a nation rising into distinction and mounting up to freedom. They there say, that "there is no power whatever competent to make laws for Ireland but the parliament of Ireland;" and among other things equally strong and just, we find them assert this as their birthright, and which they are determined in every situation to defend and maintain against whatever kind of enemy. When I find this declaration of the Irish parliament, and acquiesced in by the English, that they did come to a final adjustment is obvious; yet the words "a solid, permanent basis," convey some reflections on the proceedings of the parliament since that period, and it might fairly be supposed, that only its delinquency would have instigated His Majesty's ministers to adopt a course of conduct, by which, if they succeed in the

enterprize, they shall accomplish for ever the subjugation of Ireland, and the slavery of its inhabitants. But, Sir, I must think the people in that country, who really cherish a love of rational liberty, who have dwelt with delight on the recollection of that, till now, auspicious period, when independence came upon them as it were by surprize, when the Genius of Freedom rested upon their island—the whole people, in short, will come to this second adjustment with a temper which I am afraid, Sir, will augur not tranquillity but disquietude; not prosperity but calamity; not the suppression of treason but the extension and increase of plots to multiply and ensanguine its horrors. Nevertheless, I must own that there is something informal in this way of treating the question immediately before the house. But much as I respect your forms, Sir, I own to you those are things, and this is a question, which I cannot permit myself lightly to discuss, and which ought not to be shrunk from on light grounds. I am aware that the grounds I stand on are at once ticklish and dangerous; that my motives are liable both to misrepresentation and misapprehension; that a licentious few, and an ignorant many, will distort or not perceive the grounds of my arguments, and the use I am desirous to make of them. But there are topics, on the discussion of which a man must not wholly consult the degree of safety to his reputation among the unreflecting portions of mankind —on which he must forget what he owes to his own dignity, if fearful of the insidious misinterpretation of his sentiments, or the more insidious misrepresentation of his motives, he shrink from the subject, and fail to do that which is peremptorily his duty. I feel that to be silent on the present occasion were to act from terror in a way unworthy of the majesty of truth; unbecoming a man enamored of free discussion; unlike the friend and supporter of general liberty, I cannot do this. My country has claims upon me which I am not more proud to acknow-

ledge than ready to liquidate, to the full measure of my ability. Is there any man who can wish to do less—or have the whole system of human connection and the economy of human passions been changed and perverted with those changes in the political world, from which some derive rank and emolument by the prostitution of integrity and all the virtues? But, Sir, there was a time when I should have been told that to agitate any question in this house relative to the affairs of Ireland, were to retrench upon the rights of the Irish parliament. That the independence of one legislature was not to be infringed upon by the discussion of questions which belonged to it exclusively to discuss upon and decide. That we could not agitate the affairs of Ireland in any manner without grossly insulting the dignity, and making a question of the constitutional competence of the parliament of that country to legislate for themselves. That, in short, it would be to arouse and inflame that quick spirit of independence, which the sister kingdom knew how to express, and had ever appeared both able and ready to infuse into a system of ardent, intrepid opposition to every kind of ulterior domination. But, surely, when now the question is the independence of the parliament of Ireland, when it is attempted to introduce measures which have in their issues not merely the independence but the existence of this parliament, honorable gentlemen will not resort to that argument. Probably I shall be told, that I ought not to draw into discussion topics that in their very nature tend to excite discontent, by being closely interwoven with the events of a recent period of distraction and danger: that I cannot dwell long on these topics without relapsing into warmth; that I am liable to use inflammatory language; that, in particular, I ought to consider the present state of Ireland before I essay the discussion of such intricate and delicate interests as embraced by the King's message. The right honorable gentleman opposite

me, ought to have done all this, he ought to have considered the state of Ireland before he introduced in this house, as the chief servant of the crown, a subject that, to be met fairly at any time requires much previous preparation, and which at this moment is to put every thing to hazard. Sir, I can see the possible danger of adding to the discontents of the people of Ireland. An intriguing, ambitious enemy, may take advantage of the crisis, and desperate factious spirits at home may seize upon it as an opportunity favorable to the success of their wild and visionary projects. But these dangers are only to be apprehended from the innovation of the rights of the people of Ireland, as forming an independent nation; and he who merely seeks to arrest the arm of the invader, to check his spirit of aggression and usurpation, so far from justly incurring reproach, is in fairness entitled to the praise of honorable and virtuous enterprize. I shall speak out manfully on an occasion which eminently invites every friend to constitutional liberty to the utmost exertion of his powers. The present moment is our's, the next may be the enemy's. I am perfectly ready, however, to give credit to ministers for purity of intention. On my word, I think they would not propose here a measure which they believed would ultimately cause a separation of this country from Ireland. With them, I say, it is necessary to the happiness of the empire, that it is essentially a source of wealth and power to continue that connection with Ireland. It is a connection which as much as any man I wish ever to preserve, and I do not think it necessary to claim the indulgence of the right honorable gentleman and the house, when I declare I believe I am equally averse as they are to sedition and revolt adopted in the sister kingdom; that I equally abhor and detest the conduct of an ambitious and rapacious foe in the whole career of his acts of unjust and unprovoked aggression of the rights of the weak or unsuspecting, or indolent states. But am

I, therefore, to vote for measures which but too strongly express the character of that system which this enemy had so wickedly and flagrantly pursued? God forbid! Perhaps we are to be told, that the enemy still perseveres in his intention of invading Ireland; and, if that were possible, to sever from the empire one of its most useful and ornamental branches. That he lays in wait for an opportunity to carry decisively into effect these his ambitious views. I do not, Sir, at all doubt that France now anxiously looks on, eager to come in for a share of the plunder of the liberties of Ireland. The enemy with whom we have to contend, is as vigilant as dextrous, and it is in the constitution of his system of universal pillage, and the indiscriminate abuse of every maxim of honorable policy, on all occasions to profit by the distresses or the agitations of other powers. To invite and encourage France, it was enough that His Majesty's ministers should have brought forward the present measure. There have been nations, who after asserting by their arms their independence, have, by their improvident use of victory, sown the seeds of future degradation and ruin too deep and too diffusive ever to be able again to resist their enemies. So true is it, that external dangers will unite communities, while the moment of triumph ushers in all those recollections of jealousy, of distrust, of uneasiness at the measures of a government or a minister, which had laid dormant in the hour of united exertion. I have told you, Sir, that I do not doubt but that France waits with impatience for an opportunity effectually to strike her long-meditated blow against Ireland. She has manifested this spirit from time to time, and I must assume it as a fair ground of argument against the present measure, that its tendency is rather to encourage the enemy than drive them from their settled purpose. Not only do I believe, that they have agreed upon some new expedition and attack, but have increased their exertions from the time the

scheme of union was first agitated by ministers. But I shall be told, this measure will have the effect of defeating the enemy, by shewing them how vain it will be in future to attempt any thing against united Ireland. Now I hoped that our splendid naval victories, that the discovery of the plots, the possession of the papers, the discomfiture of the projects of the internal and external enemies of Ireland, would have satisfied the minds of all, that no new project of invasion can be carried into effect. Sir, I do say, it is the conduct of ministers towards the Irish nation from which only we can have any reason to apprehend danger. By dividing the native and constitutional defenders of Ireland, they sow among them the seeds of treason, and encourage the attempts of the enemy on that unfortunate country. The right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) told us yesterday, that, without hearing the notice I then gave, he could not have expected such an opposition as the present to the motion, because the word Union was not to be found in the message. That I ought to have known that the described object was adjustment, not union. But I must take it for granted, the right honorable gentleman will not fly to such a subterfuge on so important a question. Indeed, I persuade myself he will admit at once, that it is a question of terms and not of fact. If, however, it should be contended, that I am borne out in the inference by the message, look to Ireland. The recent changes in that country, the dismissals of some very respectable characters from office, distinctly points to the Union. I grieve to see such a name as that of Lord Cornwallis to such letters and papers as have within these few weeks been published at the castle. It is painful to read in a letter from this man the dismissal from office of such a character as Sir J. Parnell. With these facts before us, it is perfectly fair to assume, that union is the object, and it being no longer a question of terms, I know I am perfectly in order in arguing

against the measure. I will not now enter into a detailed view of the subject; but I am glad the right honorable gentleman has given us an opportunity to know when we may regularly expect to meet it in that way. Neither do I mean to say any thing of the advantages of the measure. I can admit that this is a fair discussion always, and may at this moment safely go forward to the public. But I do not know how to admit, that not to adopt an Union, were to invite the separation of the two countries by a French force. Nay, my opinion is directly the reverse of this; and I must say, that situated as Ireland is, without having in one instance manifested a wish to unite, but, on the contrary, having unequivocally declared herself hostile to the proposition of a union, that if it be effected, it will be a union accomplished by surprise, fraud, and corruption; and which must place the people of Ireland in a worse situation than they were before. I think there are two propositions which I have now established: the first, that it is decidedly an infraction and violation of her acknowledged right of independent legislation; and second, that union cannot prevent the separation of Ireland from this country by France. The third proposition I have to offer to the consideration of the house is, that it is not possible that, in the present state of Ireland, the people can declare and act upon their genuine sentiments; and let any man who has a head to conceive, and a heart to feel for the miseries of Ireland, put this memorable question to himself—Is it possible that the free, fair, and unbiassed sense of the people of Ireland, can be collected at this time on this question? The English force in that country is at once an answer to this question. I am not to be told, that if even the people should be cheated and tricked into union, and out of independence, it is of no consequence, as the measure is intended solely for their good, and that we ought to adopt it now, and convince them afterwards. This will not be argued by

any man; or if it is, let gentlemen look to union under all its circumstances, and strange indeed must be their mode of reasoning, if they do not agree with me, that in the present conjuncture of affairs, union will lead to separate and not to perpetuate the connection. If any man should say, "Yes, we have a force in Ireland; there may be an opposition there to union, but now is our time to play their own game of 1782 back upon themselves;" if there be a man in this house capable of such mean and contemptible conduct, I leave it to gentlemen to consider what will be the effect of such an example. With respect to the conspiracies, which happily have been defeated, I own they were such as ought to be carefully guarded against; and I deplore as much as many, that the means of combining insurrection were so various and melancholy. There might have been much of the cause of revolt concealed under the measures of the government; but if the Irish should at any future period awake from the slumbers of that sloth which the slavery of union is to occasion, how are they to be replied to if they should say, "You offered to us your assistance against domestic and foreign enemies, we accepted of it, and gave you affection and gratitude, and the irreproachable pledge of all the support in our power in return. But having enabled us to repel invasion and suppress rebellion, you took from us our parliament with your forty thousand soldiers, and dissipating our independence, you inflicted on us a union, to which our fellow subjects famished and fled, could give no opposition, and this not by force, but by an act of negative intimidation." Said Mr. Sheridan, those who understand what it is to acquire negative successes, will be at no loss to comprehend what I mean by negative intimidation—"If the people of Ireland should say, that by your forces you deprived them of the means of defending themselves; that you wrung from their independence, what influenced the par-

liament not to return to them, the people, the right of suffrage, but to give the Irish people up to foreign domination?" — Consider, I conjure you, these matters, and ask yourselves what would be the character of any future insurrection? I will not say, that in all its great and interesting features it would be quite different from that recently subdued, and there would be nothing in it of which they need be ashamed. They need not skulk from the question, for the struggle would be to resent the plunder of their rights, and not the differences subsisting between Protestant and Catholic, not for schemes of wild and foolish republicanism, not from ill-humor towards one set of men, or one set of measures. Instead of an union of sentiment, I maintain, that if you adopt the measure unfolded by the message, you would create an union of dissatisfaction. It is impossible to conceive that the measure is palatable in Ireland, unless we can suppose, that having for three hundred years endured the most inhuman insults, that at last, when they had wrung from this country that which it was a shame to have deprived them of, they would freely, and without bias, give it up sixteen years afterwards; that they would surrender their rights, because it was the pleasure of a British minister to propose, that the Irish parliament should no longer exist. This is a proposition which cannot be entertained. Undoubtedly, if I had been told that the whole people of Ireland had declared that they would shake off all allegiance; that the parliament had violated the rights of the people; that the country did not prosper under its constitution; I see strong reasons for agreeing to the proposition of union. But on the contrary, we have been told upon high authority that the comforts of the people, that the prosperity of Ireland have progressively increased with time ever since the independence of her parliament was recognized.

The Irish commons have been thanked in speeches

from the throne for their patriotic vigilance in defeating the internal enemies of the country: and are the people of Ireland now to be told, that on the eve of new insurrections, the parliament of Great Britain, sitting in Westminster, can better provide means of security and defence for Ireland, than could the parliament of Ireland sitting in Dublin? After the example we have had of the great wisdom and profound powers of minute research of our own parliament on a memorable occasion, after the report of the celebrated committee of conspiracy, whose reports stand contradicted by the verdicts of British juries, and whose accusations have been falsified by verdicts of acquittal—(A cry of "Hear! Hear!")—Gentlemen may, if they please, deny me this conclusion from the premises, but I peremptorily repeat it—they may talk as disrespectfully as they please of English juries, but I maintain, that the juries of Ireland, to say the least, have returned verdicts of conviction more contrary to justice, and much more dishonorable to them as men, than those acquittals of the juries of England could possibly be. But to return to the question: are we to be told that the measure of an union will not wholly dissolve the legislature of Ireland; that independence will survive union, though in a modified state; that parliament will be left to judge of the local affairs of Ireland? Really, Sir, this seems almost too much for men's feelings—a parliament!—a sort of national vestry for the Parish of Ireland sitting in a kind of mock legislative capacity, after being ignobly degraded from the rank of representatives of an independent people; and deprived of the functions of an inquisitorial power, exercising and enjoying the greatest authority that any parliament can possess. From these propositions, and having merits to plead, the presumption fairly is, that it is impossible the members of the Irish parliament, no more than their constituents, can come to the question of union with unbiassed minds, or agree to it

under any other circumstance except of great force. Consider the question in another point of view. "Is the parliament of England competent to legislate for the parliament of Ireland?" Impossible. Every advantage of situation favors the one, the other is unfitted for governing, or giving law, by every disadvantage of situation, and every dissimilarity of temper and habit. An high authority of the sister nation, no less an authority than the Lord Chancellor Clare, has said, that the English parliament is less acquainted with the state of Ireland than any other body of men in the world. How can it be, that in this state of recorded ignorance, the parliament of England is better fitted to legislate for Irishmen, than that of Ireland with its experience? To assume this, were to advance the most monstrous and preposterous proposition that ever fell from man. Or is the system of ministers to be, to embody their hoards, and after new plots are hatched, to read the riot act to the parliament of Ireland? With respect to intimidation, would it not be to intimidate the Irish, were they told England would not in future be induced to send troops, or furnish money to Ireland, and that they would be left in a state of nakedness and poverty, at the mercy of those who once distracted the country? It would be enough to arouse their indignation, that these hints would be conveyed to them by a secretary or a clerk, and some men who are disgusted with acts of Irish government, would, perhaps, give up parliament in their heart, whilst others, who will view the question with more calmness, but not more honesty, will infer from the dismissal of such great characters as I have mentioned, that the government of this country will intimidate those whom they cannot persuade. They will see to what extent the same system must be carried in the military, and every other department. And can they, after this, be expected to say, that the fair opinion of the people of Ireland was collected on this subject?

Under all these circumstances, I think, Sir, I may assume that I have made out my proposition, that if you effect an union now, no man can say that Ireland was a party to it; if so, ultimate separation must follow. Were it of consequence to speak of this measure in another manner, I would ask, what would the honorable gentleman opposite to me say if France acted in a similar manner, and this not a country in alliance with her—not so to a mere neutral country, but to a country dear to her on every account, to that country whose sons were fighting her battles in every quarter of the globe? What would they say, if after all, France annexed the territory of her friend and sister to France as one and indivisible, with forty thousand French defenders at their gates, &c.? Would it not be said, that it was the greatest perfidy? The King of Sardinia gave his consent that the French should take possession of his capital and territory, but it was the effect of force. And now we were to adopt a similar system in Ireland. I hear much of French principles, but I wish gentlemen would not so closely follow French practices. Let us abstain from French corruption, French usurpation, French perfidy. Let us leave no ground for saying, that we have made use of corruption to acquire ascendancy or subjugate the rights of any people. Let our union be a union of mind and spirit, as well as of interest and power—not that sort of marriage in which fraud is the suitor, and force the ratifier of the solemn contract. Let me conjure you not to commit a violent rape on your sister Ireland; for you may, by well-timed overtures, get her as a comfort at your side, full of love, full of fidelity, and full of confidence. You must be convinced, that she will be in a deplorable situation indeed, if the bans are to be published from the trumpets of forty thousand British troops.

I think, Sir, I have endeavoured to shew—I may say, without vanity, I have shewn, that there would

be great danger even if you carry the measure; and I should like to know what are the dangers of delay, and what the necessity for dispatch. I did expect that ministers would set out by shewing us this; but probably they have reserved themselves for a farther opportunity—(Here Mr. Sheridan apologized for any warmth he might have displayed in the course of his speech, and observed, that if the question had been fairly taken up, instead of by intimidation and corruption, the house might have expected to have seen less warmth of manner.)—The only arguments I have seen for the measure that I can suppose come from ministers, are those contained in a book written, as I understand, by two gentlemen in office in Ireland, and which contains a statement that is now circulated as the terms of the Union. A more offensive or more flimsy production I have never read. In this pamphlet I find some arguments for dispatch, and those tremendous arguments are the dread of the power of the Pope, and the English opposition; the probability that the parliaments of the two countries may alter their opinions by change of ministers; and lastly, one that is highly indecent, the supposition that we may lose our virtuous Sovereign —(Here Mr. Sheridan commented on those different points, and said he thought it a strange way of counteracting the inflammatory effect of the speeches of the English opposition on the proceedings of the English parliament to bring a batch of Irish members into that house to partake of the sedition of the minority. But it is imputed to opposition that they are liable to change their opinions; now the only example of this is the regency, when the parliament of Ireland agreed with a great minority in the English parliament in the principle, objecting merely to the powers to be given to the regent.)—But, Sir, I wish ministers to give fair play to Ireland. I have stated three of the arguments for dispatch; and the fourth for the measure is one that must every where excite indignation. This is, that the Irish took

advantage in 1782 of the war, and that therefore England may now take advantage of the force of the country for the extinction of the independence of Ireland. This is the creed of the castle; but the English are not to be insulted in this way, nor their character traduced. Having in a general way thus combated the arguments of that pamphlet, Mr. Sheridan next took a view of the subject as a constitutional question, and contended, that as well might the English parliament vote the crown absolute, perpetuate a power in the King to control the grants of parliaments, and give to this parliament a right to exercise a vigor beyond the law, and vote itself not at all responsible to the people. It is no light matter even to have one hundred members coming here from Ireland without the means of being regularly instructed by their constituents; but, perhaps, I am to be told, as I understand has been asserted by an honorable gentleman opposite to me, that when once the parliament meets, the people have no right to hear of what their representatives are about; and that, therefore, it is not merely dangerous, but unconstitutional, to publish an account of their proceedings. Sir, I must suppose the right honorable gentleman to whom this doctrine is imputed, never used it in argument; for certainly if I found such doctrine urged in a pamphlet, I should think it my duty to move, that the house might instruct the Attorney General to prosecute the author, and that the book should be burnt by the common hangman. I once recommended a prosecution in this house, and once only in my life; it was against the author of a book, where it had been stated, that the tree might remain sound even though the branches were lopped off. Now I think the same effect would follow, were that measure of restraint adopted by the house. But if it is said that the principle of Union was adopted by parliament in the instance of Scotland, I cannot admit that the existence of one bad precedent is any argu-

ment for adopting a second. With respect to the power of the Irish parliament to agree to the measure, I will say, that I think no power on earth has a right to proscribe the independence of the people. I have heard a vigorous statesman (Lord Grenville) use an argument that enforces this: he said, that to alter the chartered rights of any company, would be to change the power and prerogative of the crown, and that His Majesty could not assent to a bill for such a purpose, though it should even pass the two houses of parliament.

With respect to the enemies of the British government, it had two enemies in Ireland, "Poverty and Ignorance;" and unless it can be shewn that the present measure will remove these—will prevent the repetition of those scenes of distress which passed in Ireland when there were in the city of Dublin alone 12,000 labourers, &c. out of employment, living on raspings of bread, or starving with their families—unless these evils can be ameliorated, if not wholly corrected by a Union, I must be unfriendly to the measure. If the people of Ireland be active and industrious in every country but their own, it must be the effect of their government. First remove the causes of their misery, and then invite them, if you will, to a closer union. Mr. Arthur Young has attributed the growth of the evils that render miserable the poor of Ireland to the progress of French principles, but I am quite convinced the misery of that unfortunate class has had its origin and continues to increase with the exactions and imposts of their overgrown lords. [Here Mr. Sheridan resumed the arguments and comments on the argument in the pamphlet above alluded to, which relates to opposition; observing that no apprehensions of mischief need surely be entertained from it, especially if a noble marquis in another place was right in saying that opposition is no more.] Sir, I must say I think that noble person might as well have spared our feelings, and not

have cut his clumsy capers on our grave. He has said he is no party man. Sir, I blame no man for not being a party man, but I respect too well the memory of a Marquis of Rockingham; I respect too well the memory of a Mr. Burke; I also respect too well the memory of those principles which some of the present members of administration once were proud to avow—I think I ought to respect myself, though not of much importance; but particularly the great and virtuous characters with whom I have the honour to be connected; I ought to respect all those, and each of them, too much to join with the noble marquis in his death song over the manes of party. And, Sir, I hope, though at present the banners of opposition be furled in secession, they will again be displayed, and that its members will come forward and rally round the constitution when danger menaces its sacred foundations; that they will prove worthy of their principles, and of that liberty they value dear, by asserting and defending the independence of every legitimate, constitutional parliament, and the rights and liberties of every people. He concluded with moving the following amendment:

"At the same time to express the surprise and deep regret with which this house now, for the first time, learns from His Majesty, that the final adjustment which, upon His Majesty's gracious recommendation, took place between the two kingdoms in the year 1782, and which, by the declaration of the parliaments of both countries, placed the connection between them upon a solid and permanent basis, has not produced the effects expected from that solemn settlement; and farther, humbly to express to His Majesty, that His Majesty's faithful commons having strong reason to believe that it is in the contemplation of His Majesty's ministers to propose a union of the legislatures of the two kingdoms, notwithstanding the said final and solemn adjustment, feel it to be their bounden duty, im-

pressed as they are with the most serious apprehensions of the consequences of such a proceeding at this time, to take the earliest opportunity humbly to implore His Majesty not to listen to the counsel of those who shall advise or promote such a measure at the present crisis, and under the present circumstances of the empire."

Mr. Sheridan afterwards withdrew his amendment, and the original motion was put and carried.

JANUARY 31.

UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN WITH IRELAND.

Mr. Pitt moved the following resolutions:—First, That in order to promote and secure the essential interests of Great Britain and Ireland, and to consolidate the strength, power, and resources of the British empire, it will be advisable to concur in such measures as may best tend to unite the two kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland into one kingdom, in such manner, and on such terms and conditions as may be established by acts of the respective parliaments of His Majesty's said kingdoms.

"*Second, That it appears to this committee that it would be fit to propose as the first article to serve as a basis of the said Union, that the said kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland shall, upon a day to be agreed upon, be united into one kingdom, by the name of the* United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

"*Third, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the succession to the monarchy and the imperial crown of the said united kingdoms shall continue limited and settled, in the same manner as the imperial crown of the said kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland now stands limited and settled, according to the existing laws, and to the terms of the Union between England and Scotland.*

"*Fourth, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the said united kingdom be presented in one and the same parliament, to be stiled the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and that such a number of lords spiritual and temporal, and such a number of members of the house of commons as shall be hereafter agreed upon by acts of the respective parliaments as aforesaid, shall sit and vote in the said parliament on the part of Ireland, and shall be summoned, chosen, and returned, in such manner as shall be fixed by an act of the parliament of Ireland previous to the said Union; and that every member hereafter to sit and vote in the said parliament of the United Kingdom shall, until the said parliament shall otherwise provide, take, and subscribe the same oaths, and make the same de-*

claration as are by law required to be taken, subscribed, and made, by the members of the parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland.

" Fifth, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the churches of England and Ireland, and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, shall be preserved as now by law established.

" Sixth, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that His Majesty's subjects in Ireland shall at all times hereafter be entitled to the same privileges, and be on the same footing in respect of trade and navigation, in all ports and places belonging to Great Britain, and in all cases with respect to which treaties shall be made by His Majesty, his heirs or successors, with any foreign power, as His Majesty's subjects in Great Britain; that no duty shall be imposed on the import or export between Great Britain and Ireland of any articles now duty free; and that on other articles there shall be established, for a time to be limited, such a moderate rate of equal duties as shall, previous to the Union, be agreed upon and approved by the respective parliaments, subject, after the expiration of such limited time, to be diminished equally with respect to both kingdoms, but in no case to be increased; that all articles which may at any time hereafter be imported into Great Britain from foreign parts, shall be importable through either kingdom into the other, subject to the like duties and regulations as if the same were imported directly from foreign parts; that where any articles, the growth, produce, or manufacture of either kingdom, are subject to any internal duty in one kingdom, such countervailing duties (over and above any duties on import to be fixed as aforesaid) shall be imposed as shall be necessary to prevent any inequality in that respect: and that all other matters of trade and commerce other than the foregoing, and than such others as may before the Union be specially agreed upon for the due encouragement of the agriculture and manufactures of the respective kingdoms, shall remain to be regulated from time to time by the united parliament.

" Seventh, That for the like purpose it would be fit to propose, that the charge arising from the payment of the interest or sinking fund for the reduction of the principal of the debt incurred in either kingdom before the Union, shall continue to be separately defrayed by Great Britain and Ireland respectively. That for a number of years to be limited, the future ordinary expenses of the United Kingdom, in peace or war, shall be defrayed by Great Britain and Ireland jointly, according to such propositions as shall be established by the respective parliaments previous to the Union; and that after the expiration of the time to be so limited, the proportions shall not be liable to be varied, except according to such rates and principles as shall be in like manner agreed upon previous to the Union.

Eighth, That for the like purpose it would be fit to propose, that all laws in force at the time of the Union, and that all the courts of civil or ecclesiastical jurisdiction within the respective kingdoms, shall remain as now by law established within the same, subject

only to such alterations or regulations from time to time as circumstances may appear to the parliament of the United Kingdom to require.

"*That the foregoing resolutions be laid before His Majesty, with an humble address, assuring His Majesty that we have proceeded with the utmost attention to the consideration of the important objects recommended to us in His Majesty's gracious message.*

"*That we entertain a firm persuasion that a* complete and entire Union *between Great Britain and Ireland, founded on equal and liberal principles, on the similarity of laws, constitution, and government, and on a sense of mutual interests and affections, by promoting the security, wealth, and commerce of the respective kingdoms, and by allaying the distractions which have unhappily prevailed in Ireland, must afford fresh means of opposing at all times an effectual resistance to the destructive projects of our foreign and domestic enemies, and must tend to confirm and augment the stability, power, and resources of the empire.*

"*Impressed with these considerations, we feel it our duty humbly to lay before His Majesty such propositions as appear to us best calculated to form the basis of such a settlement, leaving it to His Majesty's wisdom, at such time and in such manner as His Majesty, in his parental solicitude for the happiness of his people, shall judge fit, to communicate those propositions to his parliament of Ireland, with whom we shall be at all times ready to concur in all such measures as may be found most conducive to the accomplishment of this great and salutary work. And we trust that, after full and mature consideration, such a settlement may be framed and established, by the deliberative consent of the parliaments of both kingdoms, as may be conformable to the sentiments, wishes, and real interests of His Majesty's faithful subjects of Great Britain and Ireland, and may unite them inseparably in the full enjoyment of the blessings of our free and invaluable constitution, in the support of the honor and dignity of His Majesty's crown, and in the preservation and advancement of the welfare and prosperity of the whole British empire.*"

Mr. SHERIDAN rose, and spoke to the following effect:—Sir, I know how difficult it always is to make any impression on men's minds, even by argument and obvious fact, if the imagination has been dwelling with delight on great or difficult subjects, or the attention detained by animated and flowery declamation. The right honorable gentleman, who has just sat down, with a great display of eloquence, introduced this question, and only talents great as his own could be expected to produce that effect in their exertion, which it is to be apprehended

the speech the house has just heard very generally produced. It is, however, easy on some questions to arouse those feelings, in the fullness of which the most vigilant may be deceived, and the most cautious misled. But much as I admire the right honorable gentleman's talents in debate—indeed, in the same proportion that I do admire those talents, I must critically pursue him in the mazes of his dextrous declamation; I must narrowly watch him from the avenues to national prejudice, up to the source and fountain of national passion. The right honorable gentleman yields to no man in charms of diction, and as beauty captivates sometimes to such a degree that reason is superseded, and the sober calculations of prudence abandoned for the more dazzling, though airy, speculations of a romantic, but fertile, fancy. Thus the power of his mind in the selection and application of epithets fascinate the thoughtless, and may seduce the unsuspecting. There are some questions, on the discussion of which it becomes the members of this house to be suspicious of talents and eloquence, whatever may be the weight of phrase in which declarations of rectitude of intention may be conceived, and in spite of every appearance of honesty of purpose. I hope, Sir, the house will not be led away by the seductions of eloquence and the attractive force of talent; but that every man who hears me, every man who cherishes in sincerity a love of freedom, and a genuine respect for the principles of that constitution which in the purity of its operations is freedom, that every well-wisher of the British empire, that those who entertain not enmity but friendship towards Ireland, will this night distinguish between the flowing and rapid elocution of an admired orator, and the steady and well-tempered voice of unaffected reason. The whole world knows that never was there a period when fine speeches more powerfully affected the public; and never a time when, from fancied security or habitual indifference, the public appeared

less eager profoundly to examine any question.—Those who cannot be hurried along with the torrent of that impetuous declamation, which more or less excites the astonishment of us all, will, however, pause to recollect the arguments, and pursue the speech of the right honorable gentleman in its elaborate detail. But, conceiving as I do, that the house is not free from the influence ever attained over easy tempers, by bold and ingenious sophistry, apprehensive that we are in the situation of men who just begin to free themselves, by a collected vigorous effort, from the chains imposed by beauty, or the seductive allurements of an amorous sportive imagination, I must adjure the house not to dispose of a question that is, perhaps, to decide for ever whether a great and generous nation is to retain its independence, and by implication, to determine whether a set of representatives, chosen by a free people, must vote themselves out of existence, and give up the liberties, the property, the acknowledged constitutional rights of their constituents, to the domination of a power, that, under the mask of friendship, has introduced among them a force, originally said to be intended solely for their defence against a daring insidious enemy, whom all deprecate, but who is not more to be detested than the pretended friend, who assists only that he may acquire confidence enough to delude, and strength enough to destroy. I must think the house has been hurried along by the right honorable gentleman from one degree of transport to another, until, in the groves of the elysium, they have been elated with scenes of grandeur, and fatigued with that variety, or enfeebled with that richness of prospect, which is to render inquiry loathsome, and which will inevitably prepare the human mind for the reception of any doctrines, however wild; and any assurance of future advantage, however illusory. I took an opportunity last week of opposing the measure of Legislative Union with Ireland, in the first stage of the

discussion; which, as matter of course, was to lead to that question. I did so then, as well from a conviction that measures of such magnitude and of such novelty should always be opposed in the infancy of their progress, as in the contemplation of what I naturally anticipated would be the effect of the eloquence of the right honorable gentleman. I then said, what I am at this moment prepared to repeat, after much considering the subject, that under the present circumstances of Ireland, in this crisis of her convulsed and necessarily disordered system of policy and general government, it is not only impolitic, but unsafe to urge, nay, even to agitate, the discussion of topics, in the issues of which are to be seen developing themselves, the poison and the horrors which are to lay the most hardy and stout of heart prostrate at the feet of a British minister—that are to intimidate and appal the most heroic spirits. Ireland, in her present temper, must be beaten into this measure, and that minister who shall make the bold experiment of flogging a whole nation into stupid beings, insensible alike to the duty she may owe to herself, insensible to the rights of the present generation, and the interests of the race yet unborn, as much as to the arrogance and cupidity of those who shall inflict the blow, or direct the torture—such a minister may have secured his minions, but it may not be altogether unbecoming him, if he be desirous ultimately to prevail, to measure his power by the force of his antagonists, and in the estimation of his means of victory, to seek an antidote against national pride and local attachments. It was after very solemnly and very fully considering these, and matters such as these, that I opposed on the evening to which I have alluded, the measure at present under discussion; but the right honorable gentleman, and a few who sit near him, I scarce suppose there are many persons in the country, I hope but very few members in this house, who have

not seen good reason within this day or two, entirely to change their opinions of this great constitutional question. Seeing the manner in which the subject was brought forward in Ireland, and in the recollection of the fate of the question in parliament of that kingdom, it might be doubted whether the right honorable gentleman would persevere in the measure; but when we consider how solemnly he has pledged himself that it should be the favorite object of the remainder of his political life to effect a legislative union of the two kingdoms, that no weight of personal labour, that no loss of popularity, that no opposition of friends, and no clamor of opponents on this, or on the other side of the water, should deter him from pursuing that object, from doing that which he held to be necessary to the preservation of Ireland; necessary, indeed, to the existence of the two countries; we are not to wonder if to this hour he continues to set all experience at defiance; and, in the face of the Irish nation, to spurn the assertion of her rights, to fawn and flatter her guileless mind, and by seeming to respect her declared, unequivocal opinion, to lull her into activity, the more successfully to enslave her for ever. But let not the right honorable gentleman deceive himself, whilst he is exerting his ingenuity to deceive Ireland. Let him remember, Sir, that some plots have been so closely wrought, some measures of surprise and delusion so intricately planned, and attempted to be carried into effect with such novelty of means, that the authors, the actors, even the subordinate characters in the drama, have been themselves entangled in the mazes they have contrived for innocence, and overwhelmed under the ruins of that fabric, which they have erected to overawe the independent. The right honorable gentleman has this day not quite given us the same strong pledge of his determination to persevere in the present measure, which on a former day the house received

from him. We are even now to take for granted that he will persist in it; but although he may persevere, thank God the house has not given a pledge to support him; and I hope and trust they will not entertain it at all. Sir, the right honorable gentleman has set England and Ireland in a perilous situation. He assumes in argument, and we are to infer that he thinks so in fact, that his power must be committed against the force of opinion in Ireland, and that the existence of Ireland as an independent nation is incompatible with his existence as a minister. I hope the house will check his rashness: I hope we are not to be precipitated into a war against the feelings, the prejudices, the passions, and against the security of the people of Ireland! The right honorable gentleman has sown already the most frightful dissentions in that unfortunate country. He has divided its parliament against itself. He has held it up to scorn by libelling its measures and traducing its wisdom, and he has yet to array the British parliament against it with all that pertinacity which distinguishes ignorance, and with the fierceness of men who are to be told that a country struggling for its liberties, only wages the war of faction, only wields the weapons of disaffection and treason. I now come to that part of the right honorable gentleman's speech, in which he has commented with such freedom of manner, has combated with such asperity of tone, a speech made some time or other by a right honorable person of the sister kingdom—Mr. Foster. And, Sir, if, without breach of order, I could suppose that there is in our gallery a stranger, who has been a member of the legislature of Ireland, or in the habits of hearing its debates, I am persuaded he would at once imagine the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) has detained you and the house almost half an hour to hear him in reply to the speech of that gentleman. Now, Sir, I think I can shew you,

that the arguments drawn by the right honorable gentleman opposite to me, from the topics in the speech of the honorable member of the sister kingdom, do not in any one tittle apply to the present question. He has attempted, indeed, to shew the inconsistency of sentiment by which he tells us the conduct of Mr. Foster is to be distinguished. Mr. Foster's opinion was, that the adoption of the commercial propositions was necessary to the existence of Ireland, and that they could not be rejected without incurring the certain risk of sowing dissentions, and of exciting commercial jealousies. This, according to the right honorable gentleman, was that statesman's opinion in 1785, and the inconsistency consists, as he has this night told us, in his having insisted in his published letters, that the adjustment in 1782 was final. Now, Sir, the right honorable gentleman himself entertained the same opinion at the period alluded to, and instead of the tame language of Mr. Foster, that the rejection of those propositions would lead to commercial jealousies—we then had the dashing periods of the Chancellor of the Exchequer of Great Britain ringing in our ears—that if those propositions were not adopted, he could not continue to hold his situation. Yet neither had any ill consequences arisen to Ireland from the rejection of them, nor had that, which would have been a still greater calamity, befallen the country—the resignation of the right honorable gentleman. Now, how does the argument stand as it really affects Mr. Foster? Why, he imagined that the commercial prosperity of Ireland would be advantaged, if those propositions were adopted; and certainly there was no inconsistency of sentiment in this present opposition to legislative union, because the question of the propositions was purely commercial, whilst that of the present period is one which is to decide the independence of the Irish parliament. But, Sir, the prin-

cipal reason why I take up this question now is, that the right honorable gentleman has this evening developed his plan of intimidation and corruption. He says, that the commercial advantages derived by Ireland from her connection with this country, are necessary to her existence; and since, in the same breath, he adds, that to have those advantages continued to her, union is indispensible: the inference obviously is, that she must abandon all her commercial advantages, if she reject the proffered alliance with Great Britain. Hence I do contend, Sir, that the people of Ireland cannot come with unbiassed minds to this discussion; and it is impossible to suppose that a free choice is left to the parliament of that country. If we wanted additional corroboration of the evidence, that such is his system, we had it amply afforded us in those parts of his detail which followed. He tells you Ireland ought to consent to a Union, because she is incapable of defending herself against her internal and external enemies without the assistance of her powerful neighbour—[A cry of "Hear! hear!"]—Mr. Sheridan insisted that the inference was irresistible—that unless she consented to a Union, Ireland was to be deprived of all her commercial advantages—Is this generous: is it fit to hold out such language to Ireland; is it wise to press the discussion at this moment, and force all Ireland loudly to ask, not indeed free from anger, Why have not we had those advantages yielded to us, on which, according to the opinion of the British minister, our prosperity depends? We must owe it to the injurious policy of Great Britain, exercised in various acts of restraint and privation these three hundred years past, that we have been deprived of those advantages which God and Nature so eminently adapts our country to afford us. But, Sir, let His Majesty's ministers grant to Ireland those advantages of which they boast—they may be conceded

to her without union, they can be improved by her without abjectly surrendering her independence. Thus much with regard to her means of acquiring distinction as a commercial nation. And as to her power of defending herself, does not the right honorable gentleman know that her volunteers have defended Ireland? And what they were equal to in a period of considerable danger, during the American war, when the enemy rode triumphant on their coasts, and in our channel, surely they are at present as capable of achieving in the zenith of our envied superiority as a naval power. It is a most cruel taunt uttered in the face of the whole people of Ireland, to say, that while you have forty thousand British troops in the heart of their country, you will awe them by the presence of such a force; reproach them with weakness, notwithstanding that you have had two hundred thousand of her best inhabitants to support you in the present war, while one hundred thousand fighting men of their nation have fallen in your battles in the West Indies and elsewhere. What is this but to say, it is true you have assisted us; but you are now naked; you are ignorant; you are uncivilized; you are weak; and if you do not accept from us the benefits we offer you, we will proceed to confer them upon you by force. Look to what the right honorable gentleman says, when he tells you he will leave it to the unbiassed judgment of the Irish people and the independent discretion of the Irish Parliament finally to decide on the present question. Are the recent dismissals from office in that kingdom the proofs he would exhibit to us of his settled purpose to leave it to that parliament to adopt or reject the measure? It is truly a mockery to tell the parliament this: parliament must see that what has been done in the case of individuals may also be acted over again in the instance of the legislature; and that the same power which effected the dismissal of

Sir John Parnell, may be successfully employed to dissolve the parliament. Will gentlemen only be so kind to themselves as to reflect for a moment on the tendency of such proceedings? If in the parliament of the sister kingdom those measures are to be adopted, the same and a worse tyranny may be acted in our own. Sir, I am afraid the political creed of the adherents of the minister in Ireland has been adopted by his supporters in the British senate. I do sincerely believe, that if any one person who now supports His Majesty's ministers were to vote with me this night, he would be dismissed to-morrow from all his places. We are to reflect on these things, Sir, while we carry along our minds to that part of the right honourable gentleman's speech, where he peremptorily says, "I do think the measure good for Ireland and good for this country, but time shall be given to the people to examine it, time shall be given for their heats to subside, time shall be given to the parliament of the two countries fully and deliberately to discuss it."

Now, Sir, what do these fine limbs of a sentence collectively mean? Why that time is to be given for the operation of corruption, time to intimidate the people of Ireland, time for the peremptory dismissal of the opposers of the measures, time for the dissolution of parliament. But the right honorable gentleman, in order to conciliate our assent, assures us, that sufficient time shall be allowed to examine his proposals with cool and dispassionate judgment, and that the farther discussion of it in Ireland will not be enforced until the heats and animosities, to which it has already given rise, shall have completely subsided; but what is this in reality but to give more time for the renewed operation of corruption, and for a more general display of intimidating measures in the form of new dismissals, against which the Irish Parliament may protest in vain? Nor was it the right honorable gentleman

alone who attempted to justify these measures. I have heard them also justified by an honorable friend (Mr. Canning), and never did I hear any thing with more poignant regret; for what sensation but that of sorrow and regret could arise in my mind, when I heard that honorable friend plead the cause of bold and barefaced corruption, and thus cloud and contaminate with its foul fog and baneful breath the pure and early morning of his political life? Would he now tell us that the right honorable gentleman had given a determined pledge, and could not now recede? Why did he? Who called upon him to speak? Was it to encourage his friends in Ireland by a display of his resolution? But that was unavailing, as the discussion and decision took place there before that encouragement could reach them; but as to the charge of urging intimidation, neither the right honorable gentleman nor his honorable friend, who answered me on a former occasion, had thought proper to say a word. His honorable friend (Mr. Canning), from his parliamentary standing, could not, indeed, have taken any part in the violation of the compact in 1782; and therefore his right honorable friend stepped generously forward and claimed all the shame, guilt, and treachery of it to himself. Like another Nisus he threw his broad shield over his beloved Euryclus to protect him from the vengeful resentment of the Irish nation, calling out to them *Me, me*, I, I am the man; wreak all your vengeance upon me———

> Me, me, adsum qui feci, in me convertite ferrum,
> O Rutuli; *mea fraus* omnis; nihil iste nec ausus,
> Nec potuit———

My honorable friend's abilities might, however, prove that *potuit;* and as to his courage, he was satisfied the House had no reason to call in question. The generous ardour of the right honorable gentle-

man to protect his honorable friend, was therefore only the impulse of affection.

Tantum infelicem nimium diletit amicum.

But the right honorable gentleman again repeats, that a union is the only remedy that can heal the evils that afflict Ireland, or that can secure the salvation of both countries. He must, therefore, persist in it, and call on parliament to assist him in the execution of the measure; he is willing, however, to wait for a more favorable opportunity, and until the Irish parliament is convinced of its necessity. And what is that opportunity he pretends to wait for? Is it not the day and hour when Ireland shall be in a greater degree of weakness? Does he wait until he can again reproach her with her inability to defend herself, and threaten her with withdrawing those commercial favors she receives from England, and from which, he contends, are derived all the sources from which her prosperity arises? Alas! it is but too much in his power to create that moment!

Mr. Sheridan then recalled to the recollection of the house the shameful manner in which Lord Fitzwilliam was recalled from Ireland at a moment when he was supposed to have been sent over to grant to the Roman Catholics the rights and privileges which they claimed. The cup of concession was just presented to their lips, but instead of permitting them to taste of it, it was dashed in their faces. Was this the proof of a sincere desire to reconcile the Roman Catholic body? And if he is acquainted, as surely he is, with the workings of the human heart, must he not be well aware of what men will do when provoked? We all agree, continued Mr. Sheridan, respecting the necessity of a connection between the two countries, and that nothing could be more fatal to either than that Ireland should be possessed by the French. Should we

not then seriously consider how far the enforcing of this measure may tend to favor what the right honorable gentleman calls the favorite object of the enemy, and which I really believe to be their earnest wish, namely, the invasion of Ireland. Seeing it, as I do, in this light, have I not every reason and motive for imploring the house not to give it any farther countenance? Indeed, in every view I can take of it, it appears to me not only to be dangerous, but as childish a scheme as that which the right honorable gentleman has chosen to stigmatize so frequently with that epithet.

Mr. Sheridan then proceeded to vindicate Mr. Fox from the accusation of not having followed up the resolution of 1782. He shewed that that honorable gentleman remained but two months after in office, and therefore could give it no effect; but did the right honorable gentleman himself, when he came afterwards into power, attempt to bring forward the objections which he had this night so triumphantly urged? Had he not now been fifteen years a minister without ever endeavouring to do that which from the first he deemed to be indispensably necessary?

He also affirmed, that an equal proportion of the Irish house of commons, a large majority of the Irish peers, and an equally large proportion of the people out of doors, were friendly to the measures of a union; but if he would but look of what that division against it in the commons was composed, he would discover that it contained almost all the country gentlemen; while, if he examined who composed that on the other side of the question, they would be almost all found to be under the influence of the crown: if, besides this, the dismissals that had taken place in spite of the fair character of those who were removed, thus unjustly removed from office, it was a shame to speak of any thing like an equality between those who opposed and those who supported the proposed union. Now as

to the large proportion of the people out of doors, who are said to be favorable to it, where were they to be found? He knew of no place but Cork that expressed any thing like approbation of it, and, perhaps, Limerick also—but was there not a lure thrown out to the former, that they should have a dock-yard built there? And, on the other hand, was not the linen trade menaced with being deprived of some of the means that tended to encourage it? Thus, to gain his ends, he held out a bribe to the South, and threw out a threat against the North—some inducements are also held out to the Roman Catholics; a diminution of tithes, and an establishment for their clergy. But what prevents these promises from being now realized? If it be right to do it, ought it not to be done whether a union is to take place or not, and parliament be enabled, instead of holding out bribes and barter, to win by these concessions the affections and confidence of the Irish people? Another argument strongly urged in favour of the union, is the prosperity which Scotland is said to have enjoyed since it has been united with England: but might not Scotland have attained this increase of wealth and prosperity merely by the dint of her own industry? Besides, Scotland cannot be well compared with Ireland. In Scotland the gentlemen of property are fond to reside, and to encourage trade, &c.; in Ireland it is the reverse. It is also said, that two independent legislatures may seldom agree; and from this want of concurrence and co-operation, the most serious calamities may arise: as well say that two independent houses of parliament may not co-operate; because the lords, for example, may throw out a money bill sent from the commons, or the commons may refuse to concur in the amendments made by the lords. The whole of these objections are completely refuted by experience; and to insist upon such objections, would be a libel on the constitution. French principles and jacobinism were, as usual, introduced in the

debate, and made the subject of splendid invective. But what was jacobinism? Was it not jacobinism that pretended to make other states more free, independent, and prosperous, than it found them? Was it not jacobinism that called on other countries to resign their freedom, their independence, and their constitutions, with a promise to substitute something better in their place? If so, was not the right honorable gentleman, in proposing the present measure, acting the part of an Arch-Jacobin?

It is not my intention, Sir, to oppose going into a committee, but I shall certainly object to your leaving the chair, for the purpose of moving two resolutions, which I shall, in case the propositions should be carried, wish to have placed before them, for the purpose of taking off, in some degree, that jealousy which the Irish parliament, I am afraid, will be apt to entertain of their passing this house, after the measure of Union having been so decidedly rejected in the house of commons of Ireland. Mr. Sheridan then read the following resolutions:

"That no measures can have a tendency to improve and perpetuate the ties of amity and connection now existing between Great Britain and Ireland, which have not for their basis the manifest, fair, and free consent and approbation of the parliaments of the two countries.

"That whoever shall endeavour to obtain the appearance of such consent and approbation in either country, by employing the influence of government for the purposes of corruption or intimidation, is an enemy to His Majesty and to the constitution."

The house divided on the question of the Speaker's leaving the chair; ayes 140; *noes* 15. *The resolutions were afterwards read in committee.*

FEBRUARY 7.

UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN WITH IRELAND.

Mr. Pitt moved the order of the day for the house to resolve itself into a committee, in order to take into farther consideration His Majesty's most gracious message respecting the proposed Union with Ireland.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that according to the rules and ordinary proceedings of the house, the right honorable gentleman most undoubtedly could claim the privilege of moving the order of the day, before he (Mr. Sheridan) could attempt to move the resolutions of which he had thrown out an idea, and his intention of moving them, upon a former occasion; if, therefore, that privilege was insisted on, he must postpone his motion for the present.

Mr. Pitt said, that though he had waited some time in expectation of the honorable gentleman's expected motion, he was nevertheless ready to wave his privilege, and to give the precedence to the honorable gentleman.

Mr. Sheridan then proceeded:—Having on the two former occasions, in which the present subject was under discussion, trespassed a good deal on the attention of the house, I feel it incumbent upon me to take up as little of their time as possible now. I shall therefore only urge a few of the many reasons which might be advanced in support of the resolutions I intended to move. Indeed I think it the more incumbent on me to say less at present than I otherwise should, because, though at the commencement of the debates on this measure I had the singularity of standing alone in opposition to the right honorable gentleman's project, yet several gentlemen, knowing what the state of Ireland now is—knowing the irritation produced in the public mind by the agitation of this question—and knowing the marked disapprobation the mere suggestion of the measure has received from the Irish parliament, are now as much convinced as I am of the impropriety of continuing to discuss it here. This consideration I should have hoped would have had some

weight with the right honorable gentleman, and have taught him not to persist in that pledge which he so boldly gave in the course of the first debate on this subject. The right honorable gentleman had declared, that to accomplish a union of the two kingdoms shall be the object of his life; not his political life, as on former occasions he has pledged, but his natural life. Happily, however, this house was as yet pledged to nothing, and I trust they will not join the right honorable gentleman in this. They cannot be mistaken with regard to his object, for he has fairly and candidly acknowledged it. The house will, however, do well to pause before they advance farther. As yet they have done no more than to refer to a committee on His Majesty's message, recommending it to the house to consider of the means of strengthening the connection between the two countries. The resolutions which the right honorable gentleman have moved are not yet ordered to be printed. Here the house have it in their power to stop: but the case is different if they proceed farther. The question now before us is, whether we are willing to second the pledge which the right honorable gentleman has given of devoting his life to carry this favorite project; a pledge, as I have already observed, not of his political, but of his natural life.—(Here Mr. Pitt smiled)—Yes, the right honorable gentleman may smile at his pledges! Does he smile that they should be thought sincere? I know that he has before now pledged himself to perform many things which he has not yet found it convenient to accomplish. When the Irish propositions were brought forward, the right honorable gentleman declared, that unless they were agreed to, he could not continue in office, because he could no longer be an useful minister. These propositions were, however, rejected, and the right honorable gentleman smiled at the pledge. He still remained in office, and had of course discovered that there was no necessity for keeping his pledge, since

he could be an useful minister without the Irish propositions. I know not how he means to dispose of his present pledge. He may smile at it if he please; but will the people of Ireland smile with him? The right honorable gentleman has before now often duped the people with his pledges, and he may, perhaps, think proper at last to abandon this: be this as it may, however, nothing could have worse consequences, nothing could so much tend to increase the evils which at present exist in Ireland, as this house sanctioning the present pledge of the right honorable gentleman. The effect of the pledge which the right honorable gentleman has given, must, however, be considerable on the people of Ireland. It will produce much irritation, and inflame all those discontents which have already occasioned so much misery in that country. Were it adopted by this house, the mischief would still be greater. It is, indeed, very difficult to conceive what object he proposes to himself by proceeding in this measure. What advantage will his argument of the necessity of a Union receive from the house joining in his pledge, when the Irish house of commons has already decided against it? If the house sanctions the project of the right honorable gentleman, the two houses of commons of Great Britain and Ireland will be placed in opposition to each other, and the situation of these nations will be more alarming and frightful than that in which any two countries, professing amity for each other, ever before stood.

Does the right honorable gentleman not know, that while he declares his determination to persist in this measure, the Irish people will fancy they can easily penetrate the means to which he will resort to carry it? On this point, indeed, they cannot be easily deceived. The right honorable gentleman has declared himself openly, and the measures to which he has already had recourse so plainly indicate his intentions, that there is little room for doubt

or mistake on this head. If he do not succeed on the present occasion, the people of Ireland must be convinced that he only waits for a more favorable opportunity: they must know that he only waits for a moment when Ireland shall be more weak to carry his favorite project, and that intimidation and corruption are the engines he proposes to use. The means to which he would resort must be known the moment that he declares he will persevere. But it ought to be recollected, that the Irish parliament do not look upon their connection with us as a boon—they claim to be independent. If, then, the right honorable gentleman has sincerely pledged himself, there is no other course left for Ireland to take, but to guard against the influence and the power of the British parliament. It has been observed, that Ireland cannot exist without the support of this country; and a noble friend of the right honorable gentleman has held out a threat of withdrawing from Ireland that protection to which she is indebted for her safety, and without which she neither could defend herself against a foreign enemy, nor survive intestine warfare. Thus the people of Ireland were plainly told what was to be the consequence of their refusing to surrender their independent legislature. The house then were to put the two countries in this situation, the most perilous and frightful in which it is possible they could be placed! Such, however, must be the consequence of the house joining in the pledge of the right honorable gentleman.

It is curious to observe the arguments which the right honorable gentleman and his friends have on this occasion used in support of the measure they wish to carry into effect. One would be tempted to think, that the right honorable gentleman had formed a coalition with the party he has long been accustomed to reprobate; a party which lately attempted to accomplish, by the force of arms, what is now endeavored to be brought about by intrigue—I mean the United Irishmen, with whom the right

honorable gentleman seems to be perfectly agreed in five or six of their leading principles. The United Irishmen wished to destroy the present constitution of Ireland; this is also the object of the right honorable gentleman. The United Irishmen declared the parliament of Ireland to be the cause of all the evils and of all the miseries with which that country had been afflicted. The right honorable gentleman has brought forward the same accusation against them. The United Irishmen charged the legislature of their country with being the dupe of the English party: the right honorable gentleman, following their example on this point, also ascribes every misrule, every error of government, all the distractions, and all the misfortunes of Ireland, to the influence of a British faction over the parliament of Ireland. It is not, indeed, to the faction which he heads there, he ascribes this influence; but he has asserted, that it was exerted by one, at the head of which the Duke of Portland stood, and of which his honorable friend (Mr. Windham) near him was a member. He has told us, that that faction made a tool of the Irish parliament to answer its own purposes; and the United Irishmen have repeatedly made the same assertion: thus they are agreed as to the evil. They are agreed as to the remedy, for they both prescribe a revolution—*Delanda est Carthago* is the maxim of both. The Irish parliament, they agree, must be destroyed, and this is made the grand cure. The United Irishmen and the right honorable gentleman have proposed to apply their remedy, however, in somewhat a different manner. He would incorporate a few of the representatives of the people of Ireland in the British parliament. With respect to the means by which these measures were to be carried into effect, they are also very much alike. The United Irishmen said, they knew better what was good for Ireland than all the rest of the people of Ireland did: the right honorable gentleman has

said the same thing of himself: like him too, the United Irishmen did not scruple to make use of corruption to gain their object; they resorted to force and intimidation; the right honorable gentleman has done the same. The only difference between the two was, that the United Irishmen conceiving their parliament to be the mere tools of England, were for deposing it, and setting up a republican form of government with foreign assistance; while the right honorable gentleman was for merging down the Irish representation into that of England. His plan, as well as their's, proposes the extinguishing the parliament of Ireland, and the means he uses to insure himself success, are the same as those to which they resorted. The question, then, which we have now to consider is, whether a British parliament will second the right honorable gentleman in his project, and sanction this similarity between him and the leaders of that rebellion, which the house lately so much deplored.

It was once observed by an honorable friend of mine, in speaking of an honorable gentleman in this house, that he had a temper so pugnacious and so obstinate, that if he saw two persons fighting in the streets he would never think of separating them, but would rather insist that they should go on and fight it out. This was said by an amateur of the art of pugilism, at a time when that honorable science was held in greater repute than it is now. But with whatever truth it may have been said, I should hope that no Secretary at War would wish to see a legislative battle of the kind, with which we are now threatened, but that he would rather wish to separate the combatants when he should know that they were the Irish parliament and the British Chancellor of the Exchequer. Let the battle, however, be fought when it may, it will not be uninteresting. Each party is well seconded. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has two allies—corruption and intimidation. The people of Ireland has two allies

also—honor and resolution—honor to resist the corruption, and resolution to laugh at the intimidation of the right honorable gentleman.

We have been told, that the existence of Ireland depends upon this project being carried. This I certainly do deny. The proposition has not, and never can be made out; but it is a melancholy consideration that the right hon. gentleman should still obstinately persist in his scheme, after the solemn manner in which it has been rejected by the parliament of Ireland; and after he knows in what detestation it has been held by the great majority of the people of that country. If the right hon. gentleman continue still in the same temper, and if this house adopt his plan, the people of Ireland may naturally be expected to resort, and they ought to resort to every method of precaution, calculated to defeat the right honorable gentleman's scheme, and to oppose the influence which he would exercise over them by the weight and example of the British parliament.

Much has been said upon the corruption and misgovernment of the Irish parliament; and it is not a little extraordinary that these imputations, so congenial to the sentiments of United Irishmen, should come from those mouths which not long since poured forth eulogiums on that very parliament, which they now so grossly libel. I am far from pretending that the Irish parliament is free from all blame. I do not mean to say that it has never neglected its duty, nor over-stretched its power. I ascribe to it no infallibility; but when the right honorable gentleman has so lately pronounced that parliament he now censures the saviour of Ireland—when he has, through the medium of the Viceroy, congratulated them on the suppression of an insurrection, and on the defeat of an invading enemy, I may be allowed to state it as an argument against the right honorable gentleman, that, after giving the parliament of Ireland credit for doing so much good to the country,

he has no right, and indeed he cannot with consistency, charge them with corruption and misrule, and pretend that this new charge of his shews the necessity of the measure he wishes the house to agree to. I must say, however, that were I asked whether the parliament of Ireland may not sometimes have fallen into errors; whether many of the evils which exist in the present situation of Ireland, and much of the distress of the people, might not have been remedied by them? these are propositions which I perhaps should not be inclined to deny; but I shall always contend, that a union is not the cure for the evils that are complained of, and that a British legislature can never correct the political defects, or remove the distresses of Ireland, so well and so effectually as its own legislature. To maintain his position, the right honorable gentleman is condemned to shew that the state of Ireland would have this day been better than it now is, if a union had taken place at a former period: he must prove to us, that the adoption of his measure would have prevented insurrection, silenced all discontents, united all the discordant interests, and conciliated all the exasperated feelings and irritable passions of the country; unless he do this, his case is not made out, and upon this ground, I am willing to rest the merits of the discussion.

Doubtless there is much to be done in the way of reform and improvement in Ireland; but to do this it surely is not necessary to pull down the credit and authority of parliament. I should not have expected this conduct from the right honorable gentleman, whom I have so often heard declaim against all hasty alterations in forms of government, and that spirit of innovation which is proved to overthrow instead of propping and repairing ancient institutions: I should not have expected that he would be the first to lay violent hands upon the Irish parliament. Bad as he has represented that parliament, and however blameable it may

have been, it has certainly recovered much of its credit and character by the noble stand it has made in the defence of the liberties and independence of the country.

The argument that the right honorable gentleman and his friend used when they asserted that a union was indispensable to the continuation of the connection between the two countries, I cannot admit. I deny what has been so positively asserted, that we have no alternative but division and separation, or union. The real alternative is, that the Irish government should no longer continue to be a corrupt English job. Is it meant to be asserted that there is some innate depravity in the Irish character which renders them unfit to have a parliament of their own? No, the cause of the corruption which has been complained of is obvious—The government of Ireland has been made a job for the advantage of English ministers; this is the corruption—this is the will that has pervaded it from first to last; but before Ireland be required to surrender her independence, let at least a trial be made of what can be done by an honest Irish parliament; —by a parliament uninfluenced by a British minister, by a parliament having the interest and the happiness of Ireland for its object; and looking to Irish prosperity, and Irish gratitude for its reward. Let it not be a parliament looking to St. James's only, but one that shall have the advantage of the country constantly in view. Let this experiment at least be tried before the annihilation of the Irish parliament be proposed. I am certain that nothing can be done in this way which would not tend to strengthen the bonds that unite the two countries: and I deny that we are driven to the alternatives stated by the right honorable gentleman. In the position in which the two countries are now imprudently placed, if there were a disposition to separation, that disposition must be greatly increased. The right honorable gentleman holds out that Ireland is

helpless and dependent: he threatens the country with a measure it detests, and drives the people to take every precaution against the corruption and the intimidation with which he menaces them. The right honorable gentleman has displayed much eloquence in describing the political defects of the government of Ireland, but he will not succeed in persuading the people that all the advantages he promises them from a union cannot be as fully enjoyed under a parliament in their own country. It seems to be a favorite maxim with the right honorable gentleman and his friends, that it is not possible there can be a good government in Ireland. The absurdity of this assertion is too obvious to require any refutation. On a former occasion, I observed that the character and habits of the people of Ireland were such as would render the removal of their legislature fatal to their industry and ruinous to the nation. Indeed, it is my confirmed opinion, that if ever there was a country in which a tangible, visible, and resident government was necessary, that country is Ireland. The right honorable gentleman has told us, that Ireland will obtain great commercial advantages in consequence of a union—Why not give Ireland these advantages without a union? He has told us that the situation of the catholics and the dissenters will be improved; but he has not said why these ameliorations must not take place without a union. If, indeed, Ireland is to be regarded as a conquered country, then there is an end to all arguments of this kind. If gentlemen proceed upon this principle, they should come boldly forward and state it.

I have already said so much on this subject, that it is not necessary for me now to detain the house by any farther argument against the project of the right honorable gentleman; but I cannot help noticing a very singular answer which was given to one of the most important objections against a union. It is generally admitted that the distress and poverty of

the lower orders in Ireland is in a great measure owing to the number of absentees. This evil, it was observed, would be increased by a union. A noble lord has, however, asserted that a union would not increase the number of absentees, but that, on the contrary, it would make them reside more on their estates than they now do. He contends that the importance of a seat in the imperial legislature will make the Irish landlords anxious to cultivate the affections of their tenants. This, instead of conciliating, seems rather calculated to insult the feelings of the people. They were to be told when the absentee came to canvas, that he was not now soliciting a seat in the puny and miserable house of commons of their own country, but in the imperial legislature: this is, however, a very singular argument, since the object of it is to prove, that men become kinder landlords in proportion as their legislative duty places them at a greater distance from their tenants; that they will be better neighbours, in consequence of only visiting their estates once in twelve months, and that they will all at once become humane, generous and benevolent, from the worst of motives. It is surely no great compliment to the gentlemen of Ireland, to state that they are only likely to do good from motives such as these. The noble lord must certainly have a very high idea of the impression that will be made upon the Irish members when they enter this Imperial house. He, perhaps, pictures to himself, the hundred Irish knights struck dumb with astonishment and awe: he, doubtless, imagines that they will all possess the kind of diffidence which used to distinguish the former speakers of this house, who were always forced into the chair, until you, Sir, set another example. The noble lord possibly expects that it will be necessary to order the Serjeant at Arms to force the Irish members into the imperial house, and that they will be confounded, that they will actually crawl in upon all fours; and all this the noble lord tells us

will make them kinder landlords and better neighbours. This sort of argument is not very well calculated to conciliate the good will of the Irish; it would rather irritate and provoke them; but it is needless to dwell longer on this, the Irish are not so dull and stupid a race as not to see its tendency, although it were not pointed out to them. I shall therefore take up the time of the house no longer, but proceed to make the motion of which I have given notice. I believe there are few that will not agree to the first part of the resolution. It contains a truism, which, if the right honorable gentleman had not already declared he would oppose, I should not have expected to have been objected to by any one, whether their sentiments be for or against the measure. The right honorable gentleman has observed, that the resolution was unnecessary; I trust the house will be of a different opinion. The right honorable gentleman cannot but know, that it has always been the practice of parliament, when they expected any infraction of the constitution, to mark by a solemn resolution their disapprobation of the attempt, following up the resolution with a pledge, that if the attempt should be persisted in, punishment would be inflicted on those who should be found guilty.

Mr. Sheridan then moved the following resolution:—

"That no measures can have a tendency to improve and perpetuate the ties of amity and connection now existing between Great Britain and Ireland, which have not for their basis the manifest, fair, and free consent of the two countries.

"That whoever shall endeavor to obtain the appearance of such consent and approbation in either country, by employing the influence of government, for the purposes of corruption and intimidation, is an enemy to His Majesty and the constitution."

Mr. Pitt moved the previous question, and upon which the house divided; ayes 141; *noes* 25.

A debate then followed on a motion for the Speaker leaving the chair.

Mr. Sheridan said, that after having resumed the question at so great a length in the former part of this evening, it was not his intention to have troubled them again; but that some parts of the right honorable gentleman's speech, in answer to his honorable friend (Mr. Grey), required that he should request the attention of the house to their fallacy, as well as the failure of the right honorable gentleman's promises respecting them. He then shewed that the right honorable gentleman had pledged himself to answer Mr. Grey's speech, and had but slightly touched on any part of it—had charged him with uttering inconsistencies, not one of which he had been able to point out. Mr. Sheridan then proceeded to take some parts of the right honorable gentleman's speech which struck him as very extraordinary; and he would begin by alluding to the latter part of his speech first. The right honorable gentleman had laid great stress on the necessity of the union, from the determination of the French to use their utmost exertions for the separation of the two countries; but he denied that the measure could have the desired effect, or in the least to cause the French to desist or relax in their designs, because he contended that the French had never built their hopes in the smallest degree, on the separation of the two legislatures, as had been inferred by the right honorable gentleman; but, on the contrary, had all along rested their hopes on the desires and discontents of the great body of the people. If, therefore, these resolutions, by being pushed forward at the present moment, contrary to the sense of the Irish parliament, as well as to that of the people, the French would have greater cause than ever to resume and redouble their exertions, and to irritate farther the minds of the Irish nation, as well as the parliament, on the subject to which they were so feelingly alive, must, he feared, be at-

ended with the most mischievous consequences. The right honorable gentleman, he said, had built his argument very much on the discontents in Ireland being founded on the excluded situation of the Catholics, and had held it out by the way of lure, that if Ireland came under the regulation of an incorporated and imperial parliament, their situation might be altered for the better. But unfortunately for the right honorable gentleman's argument, another part of his speech proved how little they had to expect on that head; for he had shewn, that the British parliament had, without the same excuse of that body in England, forming three fourths of the community; and therefore, without the dread of their participation of equal privileges with the Protestants, being attended with that danger to the supremacy of the Protestant interest, had acted far more illiberally towards the Catholics than the parliament of Ireland, under all the inequalities attending their members had ever done. He then asked to what cause was this to be attributed? To the influence, said he, of the English councils—can it be attributed to the Irish parliament? He denied that it could; for it was evident, during the viceroyalty of Lord Fitzwilliam, that the measure had been announced as intended to be carried into effect, and that the Irish parliament had never shewn or expressed any alarm at it, nor any intention of opposing it; and he had no doubt, had not that noble personage been so abruptly and unaccountably recalled, the measure would have passed the Irish parliament. The right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas) had said, that all he wished for was time; and on some expression of countenance or motion of body which had been made by him, the right honorable gentleman had inferred that he meant to gain time for the purposes of corruption or intimidation. He confessed the right honorable gentleman was right in his conjecture; he did mean so;—he did intend to signify by

the shrug, or whatever other gesture he used, that the time wished for by the right honorable gentleman, was meant to be used for the same ends and purposes as had been effected with the Duke of Hamilton, when he was brought off from his opposition, without which the Scotch Union would not have taken place. The right honorable gentleman had said, he wished to treat with Ireland on equal terms; but he (Mr. Sheridan) denied that that was possible, in the present situation of Ireland—for, surrounded as they were with English troops, which were said to be necessary for their defence; and depending, as it had been said, on the British Parliament for the continuance of their commercial advantages, they could not be in a situation to give a free assent. The right honorable gentleman had said, he made no reflection on the Irish Parliament, but he had certainly described them in a most confined and pitiful point of view. The right honorable gentleman had, however, discovered one peculiar privilege with which Ireland had been gifted by nature, and that was, she was surrounded by the sea. With this extraordinary advantage, however, he would advise the Irish parliament to give up the narrow and contracted sphere in which they exercised their independence, in order to expand their views and enlarge their consequence by transplanting themselves into the Imperial parliament, where they would derive so many advantages. Yes, Sirs, said he, where they will derive the advantage of quitting the parliament, where their Chancellor of the Exchequer was turned out of his place for acting according to the dictates of his conscience, and what he deemed the interests of his country, and be transplanted to the Imperial parliament, where they will behold a Chancellor of the Exchequer, whom no human power is likely to turn out of his situation. They might, perhaps, have the farther advantage of being transplanted into the Imperial parliament, of coming into an equal participation of the share in

four hundred millions of debt owing by this country—[Here a cry of "No, no."] Mr. Sheridan then said, that after what he had many times heard of the competence and omnipotence of parliament, there was no safeguard that he knew of, after the lengths the argument had been carried, that could be depended upon against their breaking or annulling any compact they might at any time choose to enter into on that or any other subject. The right honorable gentleman had been very diffuse in describing the benefits which Scotland had derived from the Union; and, indeed, on a measure which professed to have for its object the effecting the peace and tranquillity of a nation, the speech of the right honorable gentleman had one very eligible feature, as it was fraught with a considerable degree of pleasantry and good humour. But this good humour and pleasantry might be assumed, for the purpose of deceiving the house into an opinion that the question was not of that serious and important nature, which it ought, in his opinion, to be viewed in. The right honorable gentleman had very facetiously, in leaning over the table, favored the house with the recitals of several predictions of a Lord Belhaven, in one of which he says, that Mother Caledonia was stabbed by Julius Cæsar. Now, said he, Lord Belhaven might have remembered that Julius Cæsar was stabbed by Brutus: and supposing that Mother Caledonia was about to be stabbed by her sons, he might have confined her assassination to the stabbing of Julius Cæsar; but that he could predict that Mother Caledonia would be stabbed by Julius Cæsar, was truly preposterous. From this inaccuracy, he thought he might fairly infer, that there was not much truth in the statements of the right honorable gentleman, relative to the manifesto of the Pretender. The right honorable gentleman had said, that he had been obliged to strike out a part of it, which promised a repeal of the Union. On his asking him across the table, if it

was true? The right honorable gentleman had answered, he had read it somewhere. Now, said Mr. Sheridan, I have been frequently credibly informed, that the fact was exactly the reverse. However, be this as it may, said he, Ireland may receive all these benefits without a union; and to prove this, he had only to appeal to the rapid and incalculable growth of the prosperity of the Irish commerce she had gained her political independence. The right honorable gentleman had asserted, that the majority of the Irish parliament was trifling, as it amounted only to five; but he contended that when the nature of that majority, consisting of the men it was composed of, contrasted with the minority, composed of placemen, it was a prodigious and weighty majority indeed. He then proceeded to notice what had fallen from Mr. Dundas, relative to the motion made by Mr. George Ponsonby, and denied the right honorable gentleman's inference, that it was rejected. He contended that it was only withdrawn, and that upon the argument of, "Why press it at this moment, when it may be entirely useless? The English minister will never think of pressing this business, after he knows the decision of the Irish parliament; for the present, therefore, do not urge the question." On this, said Mr. Sheridan, the motion was withdrawn; but when the intention of the minister comes to be known, I have no doubt but it will be immediately resumed. I now come, said Mr. Sheridan, to a point which I cannot avoid taking notice of on the present occasion—I mean the competency of the Irish parliament to discuss the matter. The right honorable gentleman opposite to me has talked of "a sovereignty in abeyance in the people," and denied it on the ground that, if it was allowed, all the acts passed by the parliament, such as the Septennial Act, the Act of Union, &c. &c. are nullities—that you, Sir, sitting in that chair, are a usurper; that we are all usurpers who hold seats in this house.

Sir, I deny this doctrine; I say there is a sovereignty in abeyance in the people; and if there is not, I contend that the present family on the throne are usurpers—the practice of the revolution clearly shows the force of the argument. When King James the Second abdicated the crown, the parliament did not proceed to do any act of itself for settling the crown, but expressly called a convention, which the Lord Mayor of London and fifty commoners were invited to attend. All the members who had sat in the parliament of Charles the Second were also summoned; and every step which could be taken in the then pressing exigency of affairs, was actually taken to shew that the appointment to the crown was in the people, and in them only. Mr. Sheridan urged his part of the argument with great force and ability in several points of view, which the lateness of the hour, abridged by the length of the former part of the debate, will not allow us to touch upon. He concluded by moving his hearty negative to the Speaker's leaving the chair. What we have already given is, indeed a mere abridged outline.

The house divided; for the Speaker's leaving the chair 149; *against it* 24.

FEBRUARY 11.

UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN WITH IRELAND.

Mr. Pitt moved the order of the day for the house going into a committee for the farther consideration of His Majesty's message, which being read, and the Speaker having moved that the same be taken into consideration,

Mr. SHERIDAN rose. He said, it was not his intention at present to oppose the Speaker's leaving the chair, for the purpose of preventing the house from resuming the consideration of His Majesty's message. He did, indeed, understand that an ho-

norable friend of his, now in the country, had an intention of coming down to the house for that purpose. The severity of the weather had, however, probably prevented him from executing that intention. Had that honorable friend been present, he should certainly have thought it incumbent upon him to give him all the support in his power; because, from every account that had come to his knowledge of the temper and proceedings of the people and parliament of Ireland since the subject of union had been first agitated, he felt a sincere conviction that the most beneficial service he could perform for both countries would be to throw every possible obstacle in the way of the resolutions which had been brought forward by the right honorable gentleman. But having already, on several occasions, argued at considerable length against the principle of the measure; it certainly was not his intention, in the absence of his honorable friend, to oppose the house going into a committee. He only rose at present to move an instruction to the committee, which he conceived to be strictly consistent with the object of His Majesty's message, and likely to accomplish that object in a more effectual mode than that of a union. He was apprized that it was in his power to suggest in the committee any other plan for consolidating the interest of the British empire, and healing the distractions of Ireland, than that which had been avowed by the minister; for, though the house had twice decided that the Speaker should leave the chair upon the question of going into the committee, the project of union had not yet been sanctioned by either the committee or the house. But it was on this very account that he chose the present time for bringing it forward, as it might have the effect of preventing the farther discussion of a project which every consideration of sound policy induced him to deprecate. As the right honorable gentleman, however, was, by the forms of the house, entitled to a pre-audience, he would not now

go into any detail of argument to prove that the instruction he intended to move was such as the house ought to adopt, but would merely state it as a proposition which was fairly entitled to the consideration of the committee. This proposition was no less than that all the advantages which were professed to be expected from a union, would be more certainly attained by the parliament of Great Britain setting the example of abolishing all civil incapacities on account of religious distinctions. He did not mean that any should be taken for that purpose, which should have the least appearance of trenching upon the independence of the Irish parliament; on the contrary, he had taken care to word his motion so, as to avoid any such construction. He intended that its operation should be left entirely to the force of example, which, aided by the stronger necessity that existed for its application in the unhappy circumstances of the sister kingdom, would, he had no doubt, speedily incline the independent legislature of that country to its spontaneous adoption. He did not conceive that the right honorable gentleman, upon an impartial view of all these circumstances, would contend that the time was improper for such a measure. Whether its fitness at the present crisis would or would not be disputed, it possessed this recommendation at least, that it was considered by His Majesty's ministers, in 1795, to be a measure of prudence, safety, and indispensable necessity. To anticipate any general objection that might be made to it, he would beg leave to quote the declaration of a noble Earl, as expressed in a passage or two of a publication which he had in his hand, and the whole contents of which that noble Earl offered to prove in the house of lords.—[Here Mr. Sheridan read an extract from Earl Fitzwilliam's letter to Lord Carlisle, stating the agreement of the Duke of Portland and Mr. Pitt in the opinion that the emancipation of the Catholics was necessary for the preservation of Ireland; and

that though it was thought more advisable to delay the measure until a period of greater tranquillity, yet that, if brought forward, he was authorized to give it a handsome support on the part of government.]—Thus the measure which he wished to be given in instruction to the committee was then considered by the gentlemen opposite to him to be consonant to the principles of sound policy and justice; and, if pressed by the Catholics, was to receive the handsome support of the government of Ireland. He would be glad to know, whether the events which had since happened in that distracted country, and all of which had been predicted by Earl Fitzwilliam, were not such as to induce the right honorable gentleman to regret, from the bottom of his heart, that he had not permitted the measure to be brought forward at that time. If he should say, after witnessing the melancholy and alarming consequences of the recal of that nobleman, that he still felt no regret at the proceeding of the British cabinet, the house and the whole country would certainly hear that avowal with astonishment. Considerations of much weightier importance than any that could arise from mere curiosity, required that the right honorable gentleman should explain the motives of that sudden change in his sentiments. If he could judge by his present gestures, indeed, he seemed to indicate that there had been no change. The natural inference then was, that when he appeared to countenance the scheme of emancipation, he never entertained any idea of carrying it into execution, and that he sent over Lord Fitzwilliam merely to dupe the Irish Catholics for a time, to suit his own purpose. To this conclusion, however, it was not very probable that the right honorable gentleman would accede, for it would incur a much stronger imputation on his character than an acknowledgment that he had changed his mind upon the question of emancipation, in consequence of unfitness of time, or change of circumstances. But

either he must submit to that imputation, or it would be incumbent on him to show very strong reasons for suddenly abandoning a measure, which, on the same noble authority, he was stated to have admitted to be of more service to the British empire than any thing that could happen short of union. This, by the way, was the first occasion upon which union was hinted at, as preferable to Catholic emancipation; and shewed how long the present project had been floating in his mind, though he had not till now found what he conceived to be a fit opportunity for urging it. Had the right honorable gentleman attempted to prove that all the efforts of the Irish parliament would be ineffectual to the extinction of religious feuds and political discontents; had he shown that the parliament itself was hostile to its proposal, or that the opposition to it among the Protestant classes of Ireland was so general, as, if it were persisted in, to produce those very evils which it was intended to prevent; then would it be thought no ways surprising that he had changed his opinion, nor would he have any reason to disavow the change. But it was not probable that he would use any such arguments as these, in opposition to the strong evidence of facts. The primary object of Lord Fitzwilliam's administration was, from the first moment of his landing in Ireland, avowed to be the complete emancipation of the Catholics. It was known by every member of the Irish Parliament, and to every man in the country; it was equally well known that it constituted the avowed ground of Lord Fitzwilliam's recal; and yet so far was it from exciting their displeasure, that there never was a Lord Lieutenant who left Ireland accompanied with testimonies of more general regret for his departure than Lord Fitzwilliam. The right honorable gentleman had broadly stated, that it was frivolous to assert that the settlement of 1782 was final, or to suppose that it was then intended that the connection between the two countries should

be entirely left upon that footing, that the evils which had since arisen could be no otherwise radically cured than by a union, and that this remedy, if not adopted now, might be put off *ad Græcas kalendas*. Was it to be inferred from this, that abandoning all idea of the necessity of the free consent of the Irish nation, and considering their representatives as worthy of being put in strait waistcoats, he would proceed at once to cram it down their throats? He had said, that he wished to wait for a moment of calm, when the irritation occasioned by the first view of the measure should subside, and its many advantages could be impartially considered: yet his conduct was in direct contradiction to this principle, for he loudly talked of the necessity of an immediate remedy. There was an opposition between his professions and proceedings which was apparently inexplicable. If the right honorable gentleman would avow that he designed to carry it by coercion, his anxiety to have his resolutions carried would then excite no surprise. But if it was his real intention to wait for the result of calm and temperate discussion in the Irish parliament, what security could he give that the adoption of it would not equally be put off *ad Græcas kalendas?* The remedy of an union was then contingent and precarious, if, indeed, there remained any hope of its being adopted. But that which his motion contained was of present use, and whether applied by the British parliament or the Irish parliament, in the first instance, would be productive of the most beneficial effects. The right honorable gentleman expressed a hope, that the Irish house of commons would resume the consideration of the measure, in a calm and dispassionate temper. He likewise entertained the same expectation. It was not very likely, indeed, that they would take it up again with much favor, when they reflected upon the strange terms that had been used in that house as applicable to their proceedings, such as intoxication,

wolves, &c. &c. But he hoped they would re-consider those prejudices which led them to reject the claims of the Catholics, and generously admit them to a share of the little they had it in their power to give. He hoped they would reflect, that Catholic exclusion was the cause of their own weakness, and had been made a reason of wresting from their independence. Such were his expectations from the fair and manly manner in which Mr. Barrington and several other members had confessed ther former errors.—The right honorable gentleman might well seem surprised at this public confession of error; for certainly it could not be laid to his charge, that he had ever made any recantation in words, however frequently he had done so in deeds. He hoped the Irish parliament would reflect upon how little they could impart to the Catholic, which was no more than the power of sitting with themselves, and being admitted to a share of a few offices; and to this would join the reflection that Britain and Ireland were now almost the only countries in Europe where civil exclusion was still maintained on account of religious distinctions. They would reflect, that if the Irish Catholic acquired the possession of property, it must be through the medium of that industry which would civilize his habits, and fit him for becoming a peaceful and valuable member of the community. When they dispassionately viewed the effects that had arisen in many parts of the continent from the abolition of religious feuds; when they reflected, that in some of them the two great sects of Protestants and Catholics harmonised so far as to have a regular interchange of worship, and that in all questions of civil policy their interests were invariably united, he hoped they would cast off those absurd prejudices which induced them to consider their Catholic brethren as the advocates of foreign supremacy in their civil as well as religious concerns. They would particularly see the absurdity of entertaining any fears from what a

pope could do at this time of day. Wretched and abandoned as was the present situation of that old man, he was convinced, that if any person were to inform him that in any land in the Atlantic Ocean the dread of his authority had been made the pretext for excluding more than three millions of men from the most valuable privileges of civil existence, he would feel some consolation that the misery to which himself was now reduced deprived their oppressors of that argument. He had no doubt that they would re-consider the question, but he had as little doubt that the effect would not be favorable to a union. He had no doubt that they would see they were now brought to the alternative of sacrificing either their independence, or their prejudices, that they must make either a union of affection and interest with the Catholics, or enter into a false and hollow union with England. He hoped the time was now come when, forgetful of their party differences, the seeds of animosity would be for ever extirpated from the bosoms of both parties, and when the protestant would stretch forth the hand of reconciliation, dry up the tears, and pour balm into the wounds of his bleeding Catholic brother. He felt a firm conviction that a union like this, while it rung the departing knell of religious discord and religious broil, would at the same time, if cherished and matured by a wise co-operation, tend more to strengthen the connection between Great Britain and Ireland than any other that could be suggested. He would not trouble the house with any farther arguments, but would conclude with moving,

"That it be an instruction to the committee to consider how far it would be consistent with justice and policy, and conducive to the general interests, and especially to the consolidation of the strength of the British empire, were civil incapacities, on account of religious distinction, to be done away throughout His Majesty's dominions."

Mr. Pitt replied.—The Speaker observed, that if the house were of opinion, that the tenor of His Majesty's message did not warrant the introduction of the motion, to discuss it at present was certainly irregular. If on the other hand it did come within the power of the committee, it was not regular as at present worded. It was necessary that some such words as, "that it be an instruction to the committee in the first instance," &c.

Mr. Sheridan said, he had not the least objection to withdraw his motion for the present, but he would assent to the proposed amendment, for the purpose of having it in his power to make some comments on what had fallen from the right honorable gentleman opposite. He thought it very strange language to tell a member of that house, that he was not serious in the arguments which he pressed upon its attention. But probably the right honorable gentleman only ascribed to him what he felt to be too much the habit of his own mind, and what he thought to be more general than he would find upon candid examination. Nothing could be more silly than to say that he attacked the independence of the Irish parliament. This was a very strange comment upon his motion, by a man who had himself brought forward resolutions tending to procure a total surrender of that independence. He had argued that it was unsafe to grant Catholic emancipation without union. He would then ask, why he had authorized Lord Fitzwilliam to promise it—why he had raised that expectation in the minds of the Catholics, of the fallacy of which he had since endeavored to convince them by a system of cruel massacre and torture of every denomination?—(Here a cry of "hear! hear!")—He would repeat it, that he considered the right honorable gentleman, and those who had supported him with a mercenary confidence, as the authors of all the calamities which had befallen that unhappy country.—("Hear! hear!")—The house in adopting his motion would only repeat the sentiments of His Majesty's ministers in 1795, and give greater effect to the pledge which they had then given. He concluded

with saying, that it was not his intention at present to take the sense of the house upon the subject, though he should think it incumbent upom him to bring it forward in some other way.

Mr. Sheridan's motion was put and negatived without a division. Mr. Pitt next moved, that the Speaker leave the chair.—A debate ensued.

Mr. Sheridan said, he was suprised to see so much pains employed to prove that there existed a pledge to do something farther in consequence of the adjustment of 1782, as he could not discover that ministers could derive any aid to their argument by fixing such a pledge on the parliament of either country. It appeared to him rather to be a disadvantage to the argument they maintained, as parliament would not be so free to act as if there had been no pledge. This house had recognised Ireland to be independent by an act as solemn as the bill of rights; the Irish address entered upon the Journals of the house, declared, that their separate legislature was essential to their liberties; and was it consistent then to enter on the journals a set of resolutions directly contrary to the privileges which the Irish parliament, in its former resolution, declares its determination to maintain. It appeared, that ministers themselves had not thought any thing of the kind now represented as necessary to be done. When an unforeseen case did occur in a cause in the Court of King's Bench, for which provision was made, and the bill brought in for the purpose, shewed the understanding on the subject, for it was a bill to settle such points as have arisen or may arise to points of legislation and judicature, why did not the right honorable gentleman say then that he thought so much necessary to complete what was done in 1782? In 1785, when the commercial propositions were brought forward, nothing was represented as necessary but commercial regulations. When told that the fourth proposition did affect the independence of Ireland, he denied that such was

its nature, and even added, that it could be liable to such a construction, he rather would abandon the plan and its advantages than raise a doubt upon that subject. Now, however, he had discovered a necessity for something more, which for sixteen years he had overlooked, though repeated occasions had occurred to draw forth his opinions. He found now, indeed, that Ireland was in his power, and the time favorable for his scheme. Notwithstanding the fine words of the right honorable gentleman, the time chosen for the attempt, justified the comparison which had been made to the proceedings of France. The right honorable gentleman, indeed, had found out, that those who opposed him laboured under a charge which had never before been deemed serious. Those who differed from him were disreputable for the mere circumstance of being out of office. It seems they ought to throw a veil over every part of life but that which had been spent in office. The right honorable gentleman, and his friends about him, would no doubt approach their latter end with complacency in the recollection of a well-spent life, in which there were so few blots and stains of opposition; but they ought to be content to enjoy this happiness without reproaching others with their misfortune in being excluded from the satisfaction of an official career. The right honorable gentleman was offended with the comparison to the conduct of France with regard to Switzerland; but in the odium of that comparison, he begged leave to share with his honorable friend, for in principle the conduct of the right honorable gentleman was the same as the most jacobinical proceedings of the Directory. He was not awed by the foundling eloquence of the right honorable gentleman, as he had so often found, that in proportion as his argument was weak, he endeavored to cover its defects by lofty words. What was the case? Were a French declaimer, with an hundredth part of the right honorable gentleman's

powers, to review the history of Ireland, might he not plausibly represent, that after two hundred years oppression the independence of Ireland is at last recognised in 1782; that under the advice of British ministers its affairs has been so conducted, that in sixteen years it was left in such a condition as to be unable, as was represented, to protect itself either against foreign force or domestic disaffection; the minister then sends 40,000 troops to her aid, which she receives with gratitude, till at last Ireland is told that she must incorporate with Great Britain! Would not this be represented as a fraud to abuse the weakness of Ireland for the destruction of her independence? It was said, indeed, that no force was to be used; that her free consent would be required. This country, however, was to claim the privilege of judging when Ireland was free to judge for herself; she was to be considered as mad and intoxicated till she acceded to the proposition which we resolve it necessary for her interests. In principle, this was the same as the conduct of France, so much reprobated. It was nothing to say that it was for the good of Ireland, if that good was thrust upon her by compulsion—intimidation of every kind was used to effect the object. Every placeman who dared to vote according to his own judgment was deprived of his place, and degraded still farther, as the right honorable gentleman represented, by being turned out of office. When such motives were addressed to men's minds to induce them to submit to the views of the minister, it was a mockery to say that no corruption and intimidation were used. An honorable gentleman took offence at the supposition of a mercenary support; but without ascribing motives to the conduct of members of parliament, it so happened, that many of those who joined the minister for the support of the war, had got their job, their place, or pension. He did not say that these were the motives, they might be the consequences of a conduct; but it might have been

better if many had not given such suspicion of their sincerity when they spoke so much of the magnitude of the crisis, and the disinterestedness of their support of the minister. The case of Mr. Burke losing his election for Bristol, in consequence of voting for allowing certain commercial advantages to Ireland, was represented by an honorable gentleman (Mr. Ryder) as a proof of the liberality of the parliament of this country, because the advantages in question were granted by a British parliament; but when the circumstances of the times, and the conduct of the volunteers of Ireland were considered, perhaps there would not be so much reason to extol the generosity of this country on that occasion. In reply to what was said of the mischievous consequences of retracting the pledge given to the Catholics in Ireland, allusion had been made to the confessions of the conspirators in that country, and of a person in particular, described as his (Mr. Sheridan's) friend, and a reference to the testimonies at Maidstone. This was a subject, the discussion of which he was desirous rather to take up than avoid. He had seen many attempts made out of doors, at least to implicate those who gave evidence at Maidstone in the guilt of Mr. O'Connor. Had those, who are supposed to influence the ministerial press in this country, been distinguished by the least candor, they would have drawn a quite different inference from that occurrence from that which they had laboured to enforce. It was evident from the very paper, a connection with which was the guilt imputed to Mr. O'Connor at Maidstone, that the persons who gave evidence to his character, were those least likely to favor the designs of France, and who had the least to expect had their projects succeeded. It proved, that there was one spirit and one feeling in the country to resist the attempts of the enemy. Such was the comment which that event naturally suggested; but a quite different construction had been studiously

given to it. He should confine himself to the evidence he himself had given on O'Connor's trial. He did not retract that evidence, and he called upon a learned gentleman who had been present at the trial, to point out any inconsistency in his conduct. He knew that Mr. O'Connor always spoke in strong terms of any interference of foreign force in the affairs of England, and his mind seemed so much impressed with the superior grievances of Ireland, that he would not admit that on the comparison England had any cause whatever to complain. He might have differed from Mr. O'Connor respecting the remedy that was to be applied to the situation of Ireland; but upon that point he was not called upon to say any thing. The learned gentlemen, the Attorney and Solicitor General, both as lawyers and as gentlemen, had forborne to put to him any question respecting that point, because it had nothing to do with the particular charge at Maidstone, and because they were not disposed to perplex him by any irrelevant question. Mr. O'Connor never had made him his confidant. He knew too well his opinion respecting foreign interference to give any reason to suppose that it was a thing which he (Mr. O'Connor) could encourage. With respect to the provocation of Ireland to pursue any particular mode of resistance, he should say nothing; it was enough to say, that he never could permit Ireland to be seized on as a post from which this country could be attacked. He might pity the hardships of Ireland, but as an Englishman he could never suffer the enemy to obtain such a favourable point from which to direct their attack against our existence as a nation. Such was his answer to the insinuations thrown out, and which, from the manner and tone, he had reason to suppose, were in a particular manner levelled against himself. To return to the subject then—to the fatal policy which dictated the recal of Earl Fitzwilliam, was to be attributed the calamities by which Ireland

had been distracted. It was a matter of no light importance. Those who advised that fatal step were responsible for its consequences. The retraction of that concession which Earl Fitzwilliam was authorised to support, had prepared the Catholics for the share they had taken in the late disturbances. Ministers had been challenged by the noble Earl to deny that the point was arranged, and that he went over with conciliation to the Catholics as a leading object of his policy. But, it was said, that the emancipation of the Catholics was not the object of the conspiration; but could it be denied that the discontents of the Catholics was the instrument by which the conspirators promoted their own purposes? The conspirators had shewn, that they feared concession as likely to frustrate their hopes, and rejoiced in the irritation which the disappointment had produced. They were apprehensive of the return of Earl Fitzwilliam, as calculated to give that satisfaction to the Catholics as would disappoint their views. He concluded with urging the danger of continuing the agitation of the question at the present moment.

The house divided; for the Speaker leaving the chair 131; *against it* 19.

FEBRUARY 12.

UNION BETWEEN IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN.

The order of the day for the house to go into a committee upon His Majesty's message respecting the Union with Ireland.

Mr. SHERIDAN.—Sir, I certainly do not rise for the purpose of detaining the house any length of time, but I cannot agree with the honorable baronet that there was an understanding on the part of gentlemen on this side of the house, that they were not at full liberty to oppose your leaving the chair. There was, indeed, an exhortation from the right honor-

able gentleman (Mr. Pitt) opposite, not to give that opposition, but I should not have suspected the honorable baronet of being very desirous to obey that exhortation. The manner, too, in which the right honorable gentleman put that point, conveyed a sort of whimsical compliment. He stated; that many gentlemen had not yet spoken who might be desirious of delivering their sentiments, but he strictly charged his friends and supports not to reply to any thing they might urge. Why should they not reply? It is but an ill compliment to them to suppose they could not say any thing deserving a reply, nor is it much better to his own friends. I suppose, however, the right honorable gentleman will adhere to his own compact; and though he has thus muzzled his majority, yet I shall not be surprized if some of them should exert an independent spirit of loquacity in the teeth of his restraint. But, Sir, I merely rise to say a single word to two points which have been subject to discussion in the course of the measure before us. I do it before the house goes into the committee, otherwise I shall have no opportunity, for the moment you leave the chair I shall leave the house, and leave the gentlemen to adjust the details of the measure just as they please and judge proper. The first point, Sir, is this—It has been asserted that, during the whole course of debate upon this subject, no one member has asserted that union, abstractedly considered, may not be good for Ireland, if it could at any future period be carried with mutual harmony and good intent. Sir, I rise most decidedly to contradict that, and to state it as my opinion, though now the attempt would be attended with multiplied dangers; yet, at no time, it would be a desirable measure. That it must endanger the separation of the kingdoms, and not increase the happiness of either, and in the end must be attended with dangers to the constitutioanal liberties of both. The other point, Sir, upon which I wish to explain my sentiments is this: an honorable gen-

tleman has assumed that no one has ventured directly to assert in this house, that parliament was not competent to give sanction to a Legislative Union. Sir, I have hitherto most cautiously avoided going into that topic, but at the same time I have formed the most decided opinion upon it. Notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary, I maintain that there is a broad and visible distinction in the cases of two parliaments; the one incorporating, and the other surrendering its independence. I have no hesitation in saying, that I think parliament is not competent to surrender an independent legislature; and I now publicly avow my opinion, or hereafter it may be urged upon as a thing universally admitted, when the question may be the surrender of some of our own dearest and most valuable privileges. It may be brought as an argument hereafter, when such admissions may be of dangerous tendency. I, therefore, now, do not hesitate to say, that the parliament of Ireland have not and cannot have the right to surrender their independence. They cannot do it consistent with their duty to their constituents. It is not reconcileable to the trust upon which they hold their places. With respect to the precedent of Scotland, which has been urged as conclusive, it has a most distinguishing feature; they were summoned for the purpose expressly of considering and debating the specific question of Union. I, however, will not give my assent to add a second bad precedent, because there is one already existing. But, Sir, the question may be put in a stronger way, in which it will come more home to the bosoms and feelings of Englishmen. Suppose the question was, that we should be called upon to surrender our independence, and be united to another kingdom. What would our feelings in that case be? Suppose George, Prince of Denmark, had succeeded to that kingdom, or that Philip had succeeded to the crown of Spain during his connection with Mary—if at either

of these times it had been in question at Madrid or Copenhagen to unite this kingdom with either of them, what would the people of this country have said? Unquestionably they would, without hesitation, have told their parliament that they had no right to surrender them and their independence. Sir, I shall add no more, but I thought it proper to say thus much, that my opinions might not be mistaken. One word more, Sir, and I have done; I think all civil incapacitations on account of religious distinctions ought to be done away, and on some future day I shall submit that proposition to the house.

MAY 21.

COLD-BATH-FIELDS PRISON.—COL. DESPARD.

Sir Francis Burdett moved, "That the report on the state of the Cold-Bath-Fields prison be re-committed." Mr. Sheridan seconded the motion.—Mr. Wilberforce Bird, Sir William Young, Mr. Buxton, and Colonel Elford followed.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that the honorable gentleman who spoke second in the debate, in the early part of his speech said, if the house would look at the report, it would be seen immediately that the resolutions it contained were so founded upon evidence, that it ought to be adopted in every one of the resolutions; before he sat down he gave up the detail in that respect, and alleged what could not be admitted, that there were others more able than himself to execute the task. He had listened, he said, with great attention to three honorable gentlemen, all of whom were of the committee, whose report was now before the house; but he was bound to say, that what they advanced, instead of supporting the report, and satisfying the house that it ought to be adopted, they satisfied him that the report ought to be rejected by the house, and that a farther inquiry ought to be entered into.

It was a little aukward, he said, for those who complained of him for not always attending the

house upon the discussion of public business, to conduct themselves as they did towards him. If it was a fault in him for being absent in general, some persons might think it was an amendment in him to attend; but nothing would satisfy these gentlemen with regard to him; they blamed him for absenting himself, and took care never to bid him welcome when he came. The honorable gentleman had said of him (Mr. Sheridan) that he came at no important period, or on a point of moment, to support his friend. He considered the question extremely important and highly interesting to the people of this country; and whenever he saw public principle abandoned, or humanity outraged, and especially when he saw iniquity protected by the names and authority of members of that house, and the house itself called upon to give its sanction to such conduct, he should think the state of things critical; and, whether he neglected his duty in some other particulars or not, he should not neglect it upon this, but would come forward, and he was proud to say, he would support his honorable and worthy friend, whose motion was now before the house.

The honorable gentleman went very little into the report, although he complained of the honorable baronet for passing it by; there was more excuse for the one than there was for the other. The honorable baronet wanted the report to be re-committed, taking it to be defective, and, therefore, passed it by without much notice; but the honorable gentleman who censured him for so doing, and who relied so much upon the report, had no such excuse. The one desired the house to enter into another inquiry, and, therefore, was not elaborate upon what was before the house; the other relied upon what was before the house, called upon them to adopt it, and yet took but little notice of it. Now he would assert, that if the whole evidence was perfectly satisfactory to him, that the house could not agree to the resolutions of the committee;

but, first, he would say a word or two on the general principles of evidence stated by an honorable baronet who had spoken in this debate. He stated, not only from his own authority, which was of great weight, but from the authority of the philosophers of ancient and modern times, of Locke and other authors of justly-esteemed character, and also from Lord Chief Baron Gilbert, whose work he quoted, that in no case was a man to be examined as a witness here where he had signed his name to a petition—No, not so much as a turnpike committee would allow him to be examined in the case wherein he was a petitioner. By this rule of evidence a man was to be told, if he had petitioned against any cruelty, he could not possibly be examined as a witness; that the only regular course of examination that could possibly take place was that of asking those whom he accused of the cruelty, whether there was any truth in the allegation or not. This was the rule of philosophy by which we were to be guided. If Colonel Despard had stated in his petition that he had lost the use of any of his limbs, deprived of his arm, or that his hand was taken off, the house, by this rule of evidence, was to say—O, no; we will not hear Colonel Despard himself, for he is a petitioner—we must follow the rule of the turnpike committee—we will examine the surgeon and other persons who were concerned in the taking off his hand; the man himself is an incompetent witness; he must lie under some mistake.—What was the result of this doctrine? Why truly this—if the whole of the body of those who were confined in this Bastile, as it was called by some, not that he knew that to be an appropriate appellation to it, although appellations were not always, perhaps not very often given without reason; if these prisoners should be thus treated, and they should happen to have presented a petition upon the state of their case, they must not be heard to substantiate their complaint;

there would be an end of any prisoner's exhibiting a complaint, or, if he did exhibit, he could never support his complaint. This was a thing too monstrous to be maintained for a single moment: and the honorable baronet had confounded two things that were essentially distinct: they were, criminal complaint, and the pursuit of a civil benefit. In the pursuit of a civil advantage the rule was not to hear any man in evidence in support of his own allegations, but it never had yet been heard of as a rule of law adopted any where, as justice or equity, or common sense, that a man's own evidence should not be taken whenever he preferred a criminal complaint against another. Upon the subject of the new crimes that have made their appearance of late, the worthy baronet had used a great deal of declamation. He had said much in favor of the present constitution, and that it was owing to the present times that many novel remedies must be provided; the case, he said, must be so, because the evils were new.

Now he desired gentlemen who were fond of this doctrine, to take the whole of the ground, and not endeavour to torture the rules of law for particular purposes under the pretence of treason. Let them avow the whole of the ground, and confess at once the times were such, that the ordinary rules of law would not do for them, and that new rules must be adopted. Let them, however, be aware of the effect of such a doctrine; it leads directly, and would lead inevitably, to torture, and the train of horrors that accompanied such cruelties. We had been made acquainted, in some degree, with the fruits of such a system by what had taken place in the sister kingdom, and he thought we had seen enough upon that subject. He had heard it said, that the noble Duke, (Portland,) whose name appeared at the head of these proceedings, and who committed persons on suspicion of High Treason, was too humane to assent to many of the cruelties

of which some of the prisoners complained: he believed that of the noble duke; but, although the Duke of Portland was unacquainted with many of these cruelties, he did not believe all His Majesty's ministers to be so. He might not know that when a man was examined, and committed for farther examination, he might be kept twelve hours without food or any thing to comfort him, and that also, for twenty-four hours after commitment to this prison, he has no food or any thing to comfort him; that there was an instance of one person who was convicted and executed, being forty-eight hours without any food. All this might be said to be just, if men were guilty of the high crime of treason; but it was felt by those who were suspected, as well as by those who were guilty. Persons thus fasting and famishing for forty-eight hours, might, perhaps, have their spirits broken; and, although they might have been surly at first, they might at last give some information to government which might be supposed to be useful for the public welfare. This was the very thing he complained of; for if the practice was recognized, and a place like this kept up, there never would be wanting ministers who would have an apology for using this power; the plea would always be that it was for the general good that such things should be allowed. He thought so much otherwise, that he believed it would have been better for society, if no such plan as that of Mr. Howard's had ever been heard of; not that he thought that Mr. Howard ever intended, on the contrary, it was evident he did no such thing as intend, the use that was made of his plan, and he would have shuddered with horror, had he known that any such use was made of it. This was evident from his letter of resignation to the King.

With regard to the opinion which the court of King's Bench was supposed to have given on this prison being a proper one for persons accused of treason; he had all the respect for that court that

was due to it, but he must beg leave to say that the commons was not bound to adopt the opinion of judges any more than of jailors, upon the question before the house; they had it in their power to go into a grand committee upon courts of justice altogether, and had powers as well as duties to exercise in that particular; and, therefore, upon such a case the authority of a judge would go but a little way with him.

With regard to what had been said upon the dryness of the cells and the wholesomeness of them, he had to observe, that those who chused to have light in rainy weather, must be wet in these cells, for there was no such thing as having light and dryness. The choice was—dryness and darkness, or light and wet. He had heard honorable gentlemen say a good deal upon the comforts of this place. Some gentlemen weighed the bread; others had tasted the meat; every thing, according to them, was very comfortable in this prison. He wished some of the members of the house had tasted a night's lodging there.

He then proceeded to take notice of the condition of all other prisoners in comparison with that of those who are charged with high treason, or rather with the suspicion of it. If a person was charged with any crime, even murder, he had his accuser brought before him, and, if not convicted, he had his day of relief; but here there was no day of relief, and it was enough to be committed on suspicion only. He declined entering into the question of the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, but now that it was suspended he thought it behoved the house to be more than usually jealous of the power of ministers, to see that they did not abuse the great power that was put into their hands, to check which nothing was so seasonable or proper as inquiry.

Here Mr. Sheridan took notice of the case of the persons of Manchester, who had been charged, and against whom there was not, he said, the least

foundation of any crime, who had, however, it appeared, been kept three days in the week to be fed on bread and water. He asked, whether this was not most intolerable in a country calling itself free? and all these accusations made, God only knew by whom, not upon oath, nor under any sanction, except the will of ministers.

He could not agree to the resolutions, because even upon the face of the report there was evidence that neither the jailor, the magistrates, nor the committee had done their duty. He hoped, however, the house would. It was admitted that the printed regulations had been hung up, and the journal was not regularly kept. Here then, by the omission of the first, the only regulation which could insure justice or redress to the prisoners, was taken away. Such was the vigilance of the magistrates, that this regulation, so long neglected, they never once thought it necessary to enforce; and if this was not imposition in the governor and negligence in the magistrates, he knew not what conduct these descriptions would apply. The keeping of the journal was wholly neglected. The clerk examined on this point said, that material occurrences only were inserted in it; and it nevertheless appeared, that during the three months in which had taken place the visits of Sir Francis Burdett, the conspiracy to murder the governor, the telegraphic communications, and all the enormities complained of, none of these were deemed material occurrences to be inserted in this journal or log-book. Was it possible then to assent to a resolution which declared the attention of the magistrates to be exemplary? As to the declaration of the Grand Jury, it was ridiculous to consider it as decisive. Their visits took place always at stated times, and then no doubt care would be taken to have the bread weight, the meat of the best, and the cells in good order, while all those who could complain would be kept out of the way, and thus the grand jury might pass

through these charnel-houses of misery without perceiving the corruption and the wretchedness they contained. Such evidence as this would not satisfy his mind that all was well. It was in evidence that Aris had borrowed money from prisoners. The gross impropriety of this was reprobated in the strongest terms by an honorable baronet (Sir William Young) and the oppressions to which it might lead strongly represented: yet why did not the committee itself bear witness to this crying abuse? Why was it left for individual members tardily to express even their particular sentiments only on the renewal of this discussion? A practice of so dangerous a nature ought to have been stigmatised by the committee, and the omission he could not but consider as a culpable negligence. What horror must be entertained of that power of injustice and oppression, when men were compelled to offer their money to appease its fury? Forced loans had commonly been understood to mean what was taken from the lender against his consent; but here, to shield them from oppression, the lender was compelled to force the borrower to receive the loan. After this instance of tyranny, even upon the mode of inquiry prosecuted by the committee; after this suspicion, nay, this damning proof of mismanagement and corruption, was he not warranted in saying that the committee, in overlooking, or failing to follow it out, had not done their duty? As to the first resolution—"That the situation of the prison was airy and dry," he had no objection to agree to it, and would likewise agree to testify that it stood in the parish of Clerkenwell, but he was not prepared to say that it fully answered the purposes of its establishment. Mr. Howard's authority had been quoted to justify its damp narrow cells, and its solitary confinement. But Mr. Howard meant this confinement to be limited only to persons whose lives were forfeited to the laws, whose punishment was commuted. Neither did Mr. Howard recom-

mend that solitary confinement to be extended farther than what tended to reformation, and it was in his plan to have the cells warmed with tubes passing through them. What would he have thought, however, to see persons on suspicion of high treason, probably without information on oath, exposed to a treatment like this, so nearly approaching to torture? It had been remarked that formerly, when numbers of persons had been arrested at Sheffield and elsewhere, the good treatment they experienced had convinced them that the constitution which practised such lenity could not be incurably defective. But what would be the sentiment diffused through the country, when the prisoner wrote to his starving wife and family that he himself was exposed to sufferings still more rigorous than theirs. He had one observation more to make, and it was to submit to the Attorney General a question of great importance. He contended that the warrants under which many persons were arrested were illegal, and that ministers would be obliged to apply for a bill of indemnity. What he wished to ask was, whether the suspension of the Habeas-Corpus gave a power to ministers to arrest persons whom they would not previously have been entitled to arrest? Without information on oath, were they entitled to send men to prison, or were they merely authorised to postpone the trials of men whom it would be dangerous or inconvenient to bring to trial within the ordinary time prescribed by law? If a bill of indemnity should be required, it would be a strong argument against it, should ministers have abused the power so obtained, by exercising upon persons detained a rigour beyond the necessity of the case, and foreign from the genius and spirit of the laws of England. Upon the whole, he thought that his honorable friend had brought forward charges which deserved inquiry, and the defects on the face of the report justified its recommitment.

Towards the close of the debate Mr. Sheridan rose again.

Mr. Sheridan hoped the house would permit him to offer a few words in explanation of the question which he had put to the learned gentleman (the Attorney-General), as the learned gentleman had most undoubtedly misunderstood him; for he ascribed to him a very improper question, in supposing that he meant to ask whether persons who should have been thus imprisoned on suspicion of treason, and thus cruelly treated during their imprisonment, might not afterwards be entitled to bring an action against His Majesty's Secretary of State? Such a question, indeed, would have been improper and idle in the extreme; for how could it be supposed that a miserable wretch, who was both himself and his family totally ruined, and who had not a shilling remaining in the world, could be able to institute such an action? He never, surely, could have dreamt of putting such a question. What he asked was, whether, during the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, and when that suspension had armed ministers with farther powers for committing persons to prison than they possessed before, they ought not to be responsible and amenable for any superfluous and unnecessary hardships which such powers might enable them to inflict upon persons who might be detained in prison in consequence of the suspension of the Habeas Corpus? This question he had followed up with arguments and illustrations to support its propriety, and remarked how seriously it behoved ministers to look to that, if they had been armed with any extraordinary powers for the security of the constitution and the country, no one exertion of it should lead them to any act of unnecessary rigor in carrying into execution the measures for which such powers had been intrusted to their hands.

The house divided; for the motion 6; *against it* 47.

FEBRUARY 19, 1800.

HELDER EXPEDITION.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose for the purpose of moving for an inquiry into the causes of the failure of the expedition against Holland; and delivered himself as follows:

"Sir, upon the extraordinary meeting of parliament on the 24th of September last, an opportunity occurred of discussing the propriety of reducing the militia force of the country, by the introduction of a bill to carry that measure farther than had been done by the act of the preceding session. The avowed purpose of that bill was, to enable ministers to prosecute the expedition against Holland. Unfortunately, I then differed from some of those gentlemen with whom I always feel it painful to disagree upon political questions. I did not think that, in the peculiar circumstances in which we then were placed, it was proper to oppose the measure. I will repeat the reasons which then dictated my conduct. I then disapproved, as much as I had ever done, that bill, as a dangerous violation of our great constitutional defence, the militia system. When it was proposed, however, to renew and extend the act, there were inducements to a reluctant acquiescence in its renewal, which did not exist upon its first adoption. The law had passed, and ministers had availed themselves of its provisions to assemble that army which was engaged in the Dutch expedition. We had received accounts of the battle of the 19th of September at Bergen. Our troops were in a critical situation; and, seeing no other means by which reinforcements could be procured, I was unwilling that any thing should be done that could lead our gallant army to think for a moment that they were abandoned by a British parliament.

"On that occasion likewise I assumed, that ministers, in prosecuting the attempt which they had begun, acted on the most authentic information of

the favorable dispositions of the Dutch people. I stated, that the executive government, in relying upon their knowledge, and proceeding upon their intelligence, incurred a great responsibility. Having done so then, I should conceive, that I shrunk from a sort of pledge that I had given, did I not now endeavor to make ministers answer for the confidence which they had obtained, and for the course which they had pursued. I was, indeed, inclined to entertain no very sanguine hopes of ultimate success in the enterprise, after the experience we had of its commencement. My apprehensions were removed in some measure, when I heard it stated by a right honorable gentleman opposite to me, that we had the most unquestionable information of the attachment of the Dutch to the cause we supported. I was again damped in these agreeable expectations, when I found that the right honorabe gentleman (Mr. Pitt) shrunk from any declaration that ministers proceeded on such sure ground, when he said, that we were justified in the prosecution of the plan, by a knowledge, not of the actual state and disposition of the Dutch people, but by a knowledge of human nature—a knowledge now recorded in characters of blood and woe upon the coasts of Holland. When I heard this alleged as sufficient foundation for our experiment, I again despaired of a favorable result.

"As to the inquiry which I shall have the honor to propose, few arguments, I should think, will be necessary to prove, that it ought to be adopted. When the news arrived of the total failure of the expedition, a failure so disastrous, so disgraceful, so humiliating to those by whom it was planned, while no blame can attach to the conduct of the gallant officers and men, whose efforts were thus rendered unprofitable, the universal cry was, that an inquiry should be instituted by the house into the causes by which so ignominious an event was occasioned. Whether the public feeling of indignation has cooled

in the interval that has elapsed or not, I will not take upon me to say. The right honorable gentleman, however, did every thing in his power to prevent any motion for inquiry while the disgrace was yet recent, and the feeling of the country warm. With the intelligence in his possession, of what amounted to nothing less than the overthrow of all our hopes of ultimate success, parliament was adjourned; every attempt to investigate was rendered impossible; and the resentment and mortification of the public were left to sink away of themselves, or to be diverted by fresh occurrences.

"I profess, Sir, that in bringing this subject before the house, I do not consider it as a party question. It is one that can admit of no party feeling. It is a question that in the highest degree interests every feeling for the glory of the country, every sentiment of humanity for the loss our troops have sustained, for the honor which they have to support. As members of this house, we are called upon by the sacred duty we owe to our constituents, to investigate a transaction, which, on the face of it, presents so much argument for inquiry; and which, in its consequences, has been attended with such a waste of blood, and expense of treasure. In treating of this question, I shall not proceed upon such private information as every gentleman in this house may have had an opportunity to obtain. I shall found my arguments and conclusions upon the recorded accounts of ministers themselves in their own gazettes, upon the information furnished by them in their proclamations and treaties. I shall not consider the advantages of having obtained possession of the Dutch fleet. That acquisition I view, perhaps, as less important than others do, and I shall take an opportunity of saying a few words respecting it. Excepting the Dutch fleet, then, what have we obtained to compensate for the loss of men, for the profusion of money, for the discredit we have incurred? I should be extremely glad to know what

arguments will be employed to dissuade the house from agreeing to an inquiry. I hope we shall to-night hear it urged against examining into the causes of an expedition so wasteful in its attempt, so ignominious in its failure, that it might reveal what is not proper to be known, that it will interrupt the service, or produce those inconveniences which it has been usual to object to such a motion of inquiry. Arguments like these, I have heard combated by the right honorable gentleman during the American war, and I hope he will not rely upon them now. Indeed, they have not in this case the plausibility they may have had in others. By investigating the causes of the failure of the expedition to Holland, what is there to reveal that can be prejudicial to us in future? What interruption can it give to any part of the public service? I certainly cannot suppose, that it will be contended that there has been no failure. I cannot conceive, that the corrupt and clandestine surrender of the Dutch fleet will be viewed as the attainment of all our wishes, and the success of all our views. Yet I see, that in the speech of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, on opening the parliament of that country, something like this is advanced. The Marquis Cornwallis tells the Irish parliament, that the expedition to Holland has been attended with such mighty advantages, that it will prevent the invasion of Ireland, and so forth, and merely speaks of it as having not quite succeeded. He speaks as if the main object of our policy, and of our efforts, was not the deliverance of the Dutch from the yoke of France; not the restoration of the House of Orange to their rights; not the protection of religion, the defence of social order; but the capture of a few Dutch ships of war had been the object of such expensive preparation and extraordinary efforts; as if for such an acquisition we have subsidized the mercenary magnanimity of Russia, for this called into action our military strength, and strained our financial resources.

What other advantage than this then, I ask, have we obtained from this famed secret expedition? Secret, indeed, it was called, till the term became absolutely ridiculous. Never, indeed, was an undertaking conducted with such ostentatious mystery—never did the object of a secret expedition obtain such universal notoriety. The only thing secret in the expedition, was the favorable disposition of the Dutch people to our cause; a secret so well kept to be sure, that to this hour it has never been discovered.

"But I see by the gestures of the right honorable gentlemen opposite, that they are of opinion that the Dutch fleet is not the only thing we have gained. It may be so, to be sure, in a certain way. It was an expedition of discovery, and not altogether unsuccessful in that view. We have made three notable discoveries:—we have, in the first place, discovered that there is no reliance to be placed in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's knowledge of human nature; we have discovered, that Holland is a country intersected by dykes, ditches, and canals; and we have discovered, that the weather there too, is not so good in October as it is in June! The instruction which we have thus obtained, is doubtless very valuable: it is a good thing to learn to distrust the knowledge of ministers in human nature; the topography and climate of a country were good things also to be acquainted with. This information, however, may be purchased too dear: if we consider the number of lives which have been lost; if we reflect that the tenth of every man's income has been squandered, that so much of our best blood has been shed in vain, and all by the misconduct of ministers, we shall have little reason to boast that our discoveries have been easily made, and our acquisitions cheaply purchased.

"I have already alluded to the capture of the Dutch fleet.—I must speak out fairly what I think.

—I do not prize this acquisition at a very high rate. When we are told that it has prevented the invasion of Ireland, we are to consider on what terms this capture was made: we took possession of the Dutch ships in the name of the Stadtholder; are they to be manned with the mutinous crews who surrendered them, and employed in the name of the Stadtholder? if so, they are no addition to our navy. But it is said, if not an addition to our maritime strength, they at least are a deduction from that of the enemy. Yet, if they were to be manned by those sailors who gave them up to England, they could never have been formidable to us as enemies. This boasted acquisition, then, in every view, appears to be of very little importance. When I reflect, however, upon the mode in which this acquisition was gained, I not only think it of little value, but consider it as of the most perilous example; I could wish we had won it in some other way, or not at all. I do not regret that it was not obtained at the expense of bloodshed, yet I tremble to see a deliberating navy in the face of the naval force of England; I dread to behold the example of seamen deciding upon the cause of their country, instead of fighting its battles. I do not like to see mutiny recommended to our sailors by any example or any approbation. I hope there is nothing in the temper of our navy to catch the infection: I like to see the spirit of Blake prevail, who told his sailors, that it was their duty to fight for their country, in whatever hands the government might be: this is sound reason; these are the safest maxims. It is not wise or politic to encourage any other. When we consider how the fleet was surrendered, I doubt much whether the conduct of the sailors afford any proof of the disposition of the people. We know, by fatal experience, that artifices may be successfully employed to delude even our own navy into a conduct which the nation universally disapproves. What were the means employed to produce that

temper in the Dutch navy to which we owe the capture of the fleet? Were they such as can be avowed and justified? If ministers encouraged and promoted a spirit of mutiny among the Dutch sailors, they ill understood the interests of their own country: they have departed from a great principle to serve a particular purpose. To gain a partial advantage, they have introduced a most dangerous precedent. Suppose that admiral Story had resisted the spirit of mutiny and disobedience; suppose he had done what De Ruyter would have done in his situation, endeavoured to maintain his authority and perished in the attempt, would you have permitted your seamen to welcome the Dutch sailors, besmeared with the blood of their admiral and officers? Would you have sanctioned such a deed? Would you have applauded the doers? Would you have allowed your seamen to become their allies and associates? Yet were it only the want of vigour in the officers that prevented this catastrophe, the example is the same; and we all know how dangerous such a violation is to the principle of discipline. It is not easy to guard against the contagion: when speaking of the character of our navy, and the necessity of preserving it, I cannot help saying a word or two of practices that have long been permitted to disgrace its character, and corrupt its spirit. Every body must have heard of the system of sending united Irishmen on board the fleet: culprits and vagabonds of every description, worthless wretches of every kind are thought good enough for His Majesty's service, and people speak of putting them on board ship as the fittest place in the world for their reception. Is it possible to conceive a more gross and palpable folly, a more shameful and dangerous abuse? For God's sake dispose of such people any where but in your navy! Place them in your public offices; send them to the Treasury, the Excise, the Customs—Provide for them in the War-office; feed them with cheese parings, and

candle ends, but do not convert your navy into a receptacle for rogues and traitors. Do not dispose of them in a way that makes them more dangerous than they could be any where else. What should you think, for instance, if your ships were to be built in the same way they are manned? What would you think if when a rotten beam were found in any public office, it were to be said, O! this won't do for His Majesty's use, send it to the dock-yard? Yet the absurdity would be no greater than that which is practised every day in the manner I have stated. As you build your ships of the soundest wood, you should take no less care to man them with the soundest hearts.

"Entertaining these sentiments respecting the importance of preserving the spirit of your navy, I can as little approve the mode in which the Dutch fleet was gained, as I can enter into the views of those who represent the acquisition as of so much importance. Take into consideration the whole of the case; weigh what you have lost and what you have gained, and you will find that there is a fearful balance against you. The result of the late expedition has thrown discredit on your councils; it has heaped dishonour on your operations. You cannot again repeat the attempt of restoring the house of Orange; you have left the pretensions of that family more desperate than ever. The confidence of their enemies is confirmed; the hopes of their partizans are overthrown. After this review, I confess I cannot conceive how any man can contend, that the result of the expedition has in any degree repaid our sacrifices, or realized our expectations.

"As to the object of the expedition, in so far as it aimed at the rescue of Holland from the dominion of France, and the restoration of the house of Orange, I most readily agree, that in as far as it could have been attempted with any hopes of success, and with any regard to the actual circumstances of this country, it was as legitimate a British object

as can be imagined. I admit that it was, in principle, as sound policy to oppose the French dominion in Holland in 1799, as it was to prevent its triumph in 1787. In proportion, however, as the object was wise and good, must be the criminality of those to whose misconduct its failure is to be attributed. If, by their gross negligence, their ignorance, and their presumption, we have failed in an undertaking so dear to every British heart, the value of the prize for which we contended only augments the mortification of our disappointment.

"That the house of Orange has strong claims upon the gratitude, nay, upon the justice of Great Britain, I am sure I do not deny. They have well deserved that hospitable asylum which they enjoy in this country. They have ever been faithfully attached to its cause. Their expulsion from their hereditary authority in Holland, indeed, is in a great measure to be ascribed to their deference to British councils, perhaps their devotion to the views of British ministers. The restoration of that family to their fortunes and their rank, therefore, was in itself an honorable motive for our interference. I cannot at the same time agree in the opinion, that we had any particular claim to the attachment of the Dutch. I see it assumed in the proclamations addressed to them, that they must be ours in their hearts. I doubt the fact very much, and I am at a loss to discover upon what ministers could have formed this supposition. I cannot but wonder how it was imagined that our attempt was agreeable to the general will of the people in Holland. When the prospect of restoring the house of Bourbon in France was under consideration in this house, the right honorable gentleman assured us, that such an attempt could not be successful without the general consent of the people; nay, that it ought not to succeed. Why then did he not apply the same reasoning to the case of Holland? Why do ministers in the note, in answer to the proposals from the

French government, say, that His Majesty does not claim to prescribe a government for France, if they do not admit the weight of the maxim? They surely do not admit the principle in the case of France, because she is strong, and deny it Holland because she is weak? What then had we to expect from the concurrence of the Dutch? What influence ought their character and dispositions to have had upon the plan and conduct of the expedition?

"It must be familiar to every gentleman who is acquainted with the relative connection of this country with Holland, that it is long since any cordiality prevailed between the two countries. The French faction had been increasing, and possessed a very powerful interest in the United Provinces. In this situation, grounds of dispute have arisen at no very remote period. In the American war, the Dutch complained bitterly of our aggressions. In answer to their complaints, the Dutch were represented in speeches and proclamations as a dull and stupid people. A noble lord, then in administration, used the extraordinary expression, that the Dutch must "be stunned into their senses." By such treatment the influence of France was increased in Holland. Perhaps too, it is but fair to acknowledge, that the Dutch, in the mere view of promoting their own interests, might conceive the connection with France more beneficial to them than that with England. This led to the attempts which were made in 1787 to draw more close the connection with France. This design was prevented by the interference of this country, and by the efforts of a Prussian army. But, was this triumph used in such a way as to conciliate the Dutch? At the breaking out of the present war, the Dutch, against their own wishes, nay, against the remonstrances of many sincere friends of the house of Orange, were compelled to abandon their neutrality and to take a share in the war. They were engaged in the contest by our influence, but we were not able to protect them in

the moment of difficulty. From being our allies they became our enemies. But previous to this change, what were the symptoms of cordiality and good understanding when we were endeavoring to defend Holland? Did not our troops leave that country, complaining of the people, irritated by their reproaches? After the success of the French invasion, was our conduct calculated to increase the number of our friends, and to diminish the number of our enemies? Was it right, after the Stadtholder had taken refuge in this country, to consider him as sovereign of Holland, which he never was, to require his consent to the seizure of so much Dutch property? Were such measures conciliatory? Did they tend to promote the interest of the Stadtholder? In the negotiation for peace at Lisle, what was the conduct of ministers? The negotiation was broken off, because the French refused to allow us to retain, as indemnification for their aggrandizement, the conquests we had made at the expense of the Dutch, who had been involved in the quarrel by our obstinacy and violence. What were the Dutch to think of this proceeding? Smarting under the losses they had sustained, must they not have considered us as gross hypocrites when lately we affected such a zeal for their interests, which, in the instances alluded to, we had rendered so much subservient to our own? If formerly they saw us willing to compensate the conquests of France by retaining all their colonial possessions, could they believe us more disinterested, after having subsidized the forces of Russia, and increased our claims to indemnification by so much additional expenditure?

"These are circumstances which could not fail to produce a powerful impression upon the cool and calculating Dutchman. On entering upon the expedition for the deliverance of Holland, what means did we employ to efface the prejudice that must have existed against our disinterestedness. Look at the proclamations which were issued on our landing

in Holland. Read that distributed by Sir Ralph Abercrombie: it holds out to the Dutch, to be sure, delightful visions of future happiness under their ancient government; but it says not a word of the Cape of Good Hope, of Ceylon, of Trincomalee. The gallant officer by whom it was issued I acquit of any share in the composition. He is not answerable for its policy. But what is its spirit? We address the Dutch, a people cold, considerate, phlegmatic, as if they were a nation of religious fanatics or chivalrous warriors. Religion is dragged in upon all occasions; but why it is so I cannot understand. The French did not interfere with the religion of the Dutch. They do not seem, indeed, to have prevented religious worship in any country where their arms have prevailed; but least of all, had they any temptation to interfere with the poverty and simplicity of the religious institutions of the Dutch? What influence, then, could such topics produce in Holland? Every thing that could have no effect was urged—every thing that might engage them in our favour was omitted. We tell the Dutch to "Forget and forgive the past." But, how will they understand this advice? Will they not consider it as a recommendation to *forget* that they ever had colonies, and to *forgive* us for taking them?—The minister seems to have understood very little of Dutch human nature, if he expected such proclamations to have any success among them. If, instead of all the fine reflections upon religion, social order, and their former government, he had said we will give you back all your colonies, the argument would have been understood, and the effect might have been favorable. Instead of this, what did we tell them in other terms?—Be a nation without trade; take back your old government; be a province dependent upon England through the Stadtholder. These are the blessings which we promise you, and which you must co-operate with us to obtain.

"These considerations I have adduced to shew that ministers had not truly calculated the temper and views of the people of Holland; that they had no reason to flatter themselves with the support of that country; and that they did not pursue the course by which it was to be obtained. It was, to the last degree, arrogant and presumptuous to involve this nation in the expense of such an armament as was employed in the late expedition, upon vain speculations. The right honorable gentleman should not have put his theories of human nature to such a costly experiment. He ought to have done what every wise statesman should do—act only in matters of such high moment and extensive concern, upon authentic information and upon practical grounds.

"There is another very material point which I cannot pass unnoticed. After submitting to the sacrifice of so much blood, to such heavy burdens, it is not too much to say that we are entitled to plain dealing; but if the plan proposed had been attended with success, was it the intention of ministers to establish the old government of Holland? I confess I have doubts on this subject. It may be recollected, that a noble and vigorous statesman in another place, in arguing upon the Irish Union, represented the old government of Holland as feeble, inefficient, incompetent to its own defence, and to any useful exertion, from the want of unity in its executive authority. Was it then for the re-establishment of this piece of imbecility, this form of government incapable of self-defence, incapable of contributing any assistance to its allies, that our blood and treasure was to be applied? Or was it intended to strengthen the government, to give it the vigour of despotism for the purposes of self-defence and useful alliance? If this was their intention, they meant a usurpation; and I trust that the Stadtholder would have been an unwilling usurper. Can we conceive that they concealed this design, if

it was really entertained; if they did not communicate the intention to the partizans of the House of Orange, they were guilty of a shameful fraud in inviting them to contribute to the restoration of the antient government, while they were, in fact, to risk their lives and fortunes for a new constitution. If they did communicate their design to improve the former government by an infusion of additional strength, were they sure that the Dutch would agree to changes which violated those principles and those forms to which they were obstinately attached?—After the differences, then, which subsisted between this country and Holland during the American war; after the experience of the campaigns on the Continent in which we were engaged along with them against France; after the known views of domestic parties in Holland; after we had forced Holland into the war, and shewed, after all, a desire to indemnify ourselves for the continental conquests, by the possession of her colonies; after the grounds of suspicion which existed against our intentions, both with regard to the commercial relations and the political establishments of Holland; had we any reasons to infer a welcome reception, or a cordial co-operation? If their consent made a necessary ingredient in the expedition; had we such assurance of their favourable disposition, as to justify an enterprise, to the success of which it was essential? Ministers had no right to calculate upon the dispositions of the Dutch. They are guilty, therefore, of having squandered the blood and resources of this country upon a plan, undertaken without due examination, and concerted without a proper attention to the circumstances on which its success necessarily depended.

"Considering the scheme of this expedition, from its first conception to the period of its execution, we find it in such variation and uncertainty as to preclude the supposition that it was embraced and pursued upon any uniform views of policy. The

powers of the Hereditary Prince of Orange, given in his proclamation to the Dutch, are dated in Dec. 1798, from which a presumption arises that the plan of the expedition was in agitation at the time of the first treaty with Russia, which was concluded about that period. The declaration of the Emperor Paul, in his "zeal for the cause of Sovereigns," points at this attempt for the deliverance of Holland. If it was *then* planned and agreed that Russian troops should be employed, what was the policy of ministers? Though they had themselves admitted that the scheme must be a *coup de main*, and that its success depended upon surprise, the landing in Holland was not effected till the 27th of August, 1799! It appears that expectations had been formed of inducing Prussia to enter into the common cause against France. In June, 1799, however, all hopes of drawing Prussia from her neutrality were abandoned. A treaty is concluded, in which, besides the troops to be employed in other objects, 17,000 Russians are to be employed in the expedition against Holland. The Emperor Paul too, with that magnanimity which characterises all his transactions with this country, agrees to employ some of his own ships to transport the forces to England, upon condition of his being allowed ample indemnification for fitting out the vessels in question for another expedition. This seems to be the first specific arrangement of the plan, and the management of ministers in this is likewise singularly conspicuous! At the time when they expected the co-operation of Prussia, no very precise resolution had been taken respecting the Dutch expedition. The exertions of the King of Prussia were solicited to promote objects which, as the event shewed, would be attained without his assistance; that design, however, to which he must have been well inclined, and for the success of which his co-operation was essential, was but faintly, if at all, brought into notice. After his determination to remain neutral, ministers, as if

to shew their resentment of his policy, then determined to prosecute with the greatest vigour that plan to which, of all others, the concurrence of the Prussian Cabinet, and the co-operation of the Prussian forces, were necessary.

"The landing at Helder was at length effected. I must do justice to the gallant officers employed in the expedition. No blame whatever attaches to the conduct of the Royal Commander in Chief, or of those who served along with him. The expedition was planned upon such sanguine calculations of co-operation from the inhabitants, that the military efforts were made dependent upon the political views of its authors. The army was sent to Holland as to a friendly country. Its supplies of every kind were arranged upon this presumption. The Duke of York himself, not a member of the Cabinet, had no means of verifying the calculations upon which the cabinet ministers had resolved upon the expedition. I am aware, Sir, that parliament does not know such a body as the cabinet council. I do not criticise the selection which His Majesty has made of that body, which may be considered as a committee of that which the constitution recognizes, the privy council. Still I cannot help thinking, that at a moment so critical as the present, the Commander-in-Chief ought to have been a member of the cabinet. The Duke of York was unacquainted with the true state of Holland. His military plans and military conduct must have been accommodated to the political views and political representations of ministers. In saying that the Duke of York was a proper person to advise His Majesty, as a member of the cabinet, upon every thing which such an expedition might require; I repeat only what the public voice has declared of his Royal Highness's honorable, attentive, and meritorious government of the army since he has possessed the chief command. To his Royal Highness I impute no blame. He is not responsible for the planning of the enterprise,

which, framed as it was, must have influenced so much the military execution. It is on the authors of the scheme that we are to charge the faults of the design and the disgrace of the catastrophe.

"The army then went to Holland as a friendly country. A summons was sent by General Abercrombie to the Batavian commander, in a style of haughty menace, which clearly proved that it was not the production of that gallant and respectable officer. The conduct of Sir Ralph Abercrombie, on every occasion, his manly and upright proceedings while in Ireland, prove him to be a man not likely to be the author of a production such as that to which I allude. The answer of the Batavian officer was spirited. What a contrast, indeed, between the presumptuous tone with which we addressed the enemy at the beginning, and the ignominious escape we were at length compelled to stipulate for at the termination of the campaign. Ministers say that they cannot make peace with the French government; that the latter never yet observed any armistice that they concluded. In our own instance we know, by fatal experience, that if we cannot make peace with France, we can make a convention; know from the testimony of our own officers, that the enemy can observe an armistice. But what was the case when General Abercrombie landed? Did he find the Batavian troops disposed, like the sailors, to surrender without a blow? Did he not meet with the most vigorous resistance, even before any Frenchmen appeared in action, and our very first success was purchased by the loss of a great number of our brave countrymen? How did it happen, that after the landing was effected, no attempt was made to follow up the first advantage? Was General Abercrombie prevented by his orders, or by the want of necessaries, from advancing? It is a matter of less importance, indeed, but it tends to explain the want of arrangement in the plan, that the army was for some time destitute of

the means of moving forward. It has been positively asserted, that the army was left without baggage-waggons; that they were first cheered with the hope that certain ships in sight contained these waggons, and that afterwards their hopes were damped on being told that the waggons were in some ships, but the wheels were in others? Was it true also, that the want of other means of conveying the bleeding troops from the field of battle had obliged them to have recourse to Dutch schuyts? Surely not one British soldier should have perished through such negligence as this! Was it true that such ignorance prevailed of the roads of Holland, that the waggons, which were afterwards employed, proved useless? I say, Sir, that no personal consideration ought to shield from inquiry the persons in various situations of contractors, purveyors, &c. to whom these, and similar inconveniences, were owing.

"Between the first landing at the Helder, and the arrival of the reinforcements under the Duke of York, an opportunity had been given to ascertain the determined resolution of the Batavian army to resist our attempt. French troops were pouring into Holland. Was it not known, likewise, that the nature of the country afforded means of defence almost insuperable? Were not all the circumstances which pointed out the certain conclusion, that the expedition could not be ultimately successful, known previous to the sailing of the Duke of York? If there was not a secret motive for persevering in the expedition, which no common understanding can suspect, why did not ministers profit by their experience to avoid farther disaster? If they did not know all these circumstances, they must stand convicted of a negligence no less criminal than the presumption of persisting after so many warnings to desist. On the 10th of September, the French and Batavians, anxious to make an impression on our troops before the arrival of the reinforcements,

attacked Sir Ralph Abercrombie, but were repulsed by the gallantry of our troops, and the strength of their position. On the 13th, the Duke of York arrived, and on the 19th, an attack was made upon the enemy, which was successful in that part where the British troops were engaged, and unsuccesful on the part of the Russians. Of the behaviour of the latter I shall say but little. If, however, the accounts of their conduct in the villages where they came be true, it would form the ground not merely of inquiry, but of an address to His Majesty. The result of this action was, that the British and Russian forces retreated to their former position.

"Here I must beg the attention of the house to what was passing at home. On the 24th, parliament was to meet; ministers had intelligence of this disastrous engagement; they were apprized of the resistance of the Dutch troops, and of the backwardness of the inhabitants to assist our cause; yet, with all these facts in their possession, they made His Majesty come down to parliament, and express his sanguine hopes of the ultimate success of the expedition! If, then, ministers were aware of the true state of our affairs in Holland, a more gross contempt of truth, or more flagrant deception, of parliament, never was practised by any administration.

"After the action of the 2d of October, the army moved forward. This was represented as a great victory; there is every reason to believe, however, that it was a drawn battle. Alkmaer was stated to have opened its gates, as if this had been the act of the inhabitants, and a proof of their friendly disposition. The fact, however, was, that a lieutenant and some troops having accidentally advanced near the place, found that it was without means of defence, of which he immediately gave information, and the town was occupied by our troops. In his dispatches after the action, his Royal Highness states that it had given him the command of an extent of country, and that the inhabitants would have

an opportunity to declare themselves. What was the consequence? The army attempted to advance; an engagement took place on the 6th, in which we claimed the victory. But so little advantageous was the success, that, on the 7th, in the evening, the retreat was ordered; the army returned to its old position at Shagen Brug; and this retreat was conducted so precipitately, that 400 women and children were left behind. These the French treated with great propriety; nay, these cruel and perfidious enemies actually clothed the children, and sent them back with the women to the British head-quarters. Thus, at length, instead of the deliverance of the Dutch, the hopes of which we had so sanguinely indulged, the army was compelled to enter into a capitulation for its escape! What a sad and mortifying termination of a plan in which so much exertion had been employed, and so much of our hope had been embarked! I do not censure those by whom it was concluded. I believe, on the contrary, that it was inevitable in the situation in which the army was placed. Yet, how painful a reflection! to find that the inducement held out to the enemy to agree to the convention, was a threat to destroy for ever the means of trade and commerce of that people whom we had gone to save! I am sure that had circumstances made it necessary to proceed to so cruel an alternative, it would have been employed with reluctance. It was a humiliating thing, after such proud expectations, to fail in our design, and fail too amidst such an accumulation of disgrace. Our army left Holland with sentiments of indignation against the Batavians, by whom they conceived themselves injured and deceived; with detestation of their allies, to whose misconduct they imputed the disastrous termination of the campaign; and with increased esteem for the enemy whom they had been taught to abhor.

"Such is the transaction which the house is called upon to investigate. Never was there a case which

prima facie presented stronger grounds for enquiry. There are moments when it becomes this house to exercise a peculiar jealousy of its reputation: an opinion has gone abroad, that this house has reposed too blind a confidence in ministers: the rewards which have followed this confidence, have thrown more than a suspicion on the purity of the motive. It is necessary, on an occasion like this, to watch their conduct with more than ordinary attention. The public interest which it has excited, the universal regard which the decision of the house will attract, must render it the object of more than common severity of revision. The suspicion that the minister has nothing to fear from the controuling vigilance of parliament, must either be strongly confirmed, or honorably removed. It is not a consequence which any member need fear from the result of enquiry, that ministers will be obliged to quit their places. It would be no advantage, doubtless, to shew that the administration of this country is in the hands of convicted incapacity; but still it would be a far greater evil to prove that ministers are too powerful for control; that error is exempted from enquiry, and misconduct secure from censure. The present case should afford a salutary caution to the house, how they gave their confidence to ministers to pursue against France that system of exploded impolicy which has produced such fatal mischief and indelible disgrace. We are at war for the restoration of Bourbons, and for nothing else. All the qualifications with which this proposition is limited are mere quibbles: this is the *sine qua non* to immediate peace. It was stated in the answer of Lord Grenville, that there was a *possibility* of negociation with the present government of France; but if it be true, that what is possible is *quod potest esse*, there was no immediate alternative. We were fighting for the restoration of the house of Bourbon. The question resolves itself into three propositions—the people of France must institute a go-

vernment which His Majesty's ministers shall approve, and then submit to prove its stability. In the mean time, this stability is to be ascertained by employing every hostile means to work its overthrow: Buonaparte must show by the evidence of facts, that he is sincere in his desire of peace; while it is the policy of ministers to employ every effort to disturb his authority, and every insult to provoke his resentment. The only alternative which ministers were willing to accept as the price of peace, is the unconditional restoration of the house of Bourbon. But if no enlarged view of policy, no dictate of constitutional jealousy can move a British house of commons to institute the proposed enquiry, they owe it to the reputation of the army, whose conduct has never been censured in this country, but whose honor has been cruelly attacked abroad, to investigate the transaction to the bottom, and lay the blame where it ought to fall. Read the report which has been published in the Petersburgh Gazette* of the dif-

* PETERSBURGH, OCT. 22. *(From the Court Gazette).*—Major General Hessen, from his head quarters at Zypser Schlusen:—

"I humbly acquaint your Imperial Majesty, that on the 4th of September, I arrived from Yarmouth with the first division of troops before the Texel. We disembarked immediately in row-boats, and landed all our troops on the 6th at the Helder, though in a violent gale of wind. General Herman had arrived before me, and was at the distance of 35 werstes from the Helder, towards Alkmaer. By his orders I joined him on the 7th; and on the 8th in the morning, at four o'clock, we proceeded in three columns, and attacked the enemy with a bravery only characteristic to your Majesty's subjects. We drove him from three strong entrenchments, took all the batteries with the bayonet, and entered three strong villages, with the town of Bergen. We had already taken fourteen pieces of cannon, about 1000 prisoners, and killed upwards of 2000 of the enemy. However, all our ammunition being exhausted, we could no longer carry on offensive operations against a numerous enemy, who employed all his forces against us, who forced the right wing of our allies, who intended to attack at the same time, but who, from causes unknown to me, were two hours too late, which considerably injured the victory which we had already gained. Lieutenant General Herman was made prisoner. I cannot conceal from you, most gracious Sovereign, that the troops of your Majesty are in want of the most necessary articles:

ferent actions in Holland, and say whether you are not called upon to vindicate the character of the British army? Do you feel so little for the military fame of your country, as to suffer your brave soldiers to stand in the face of Europe branded with such a stigma? Do you esteem so little the reputation of the gallant officers employed in Holland, the Duke of York, Sir Ralph Abercrombie, Sir James Pulteney, General Dundas, that excellent officer General Moore, and those who served with him, as to allow the aspersions cast upon their renown in the libellous letter of General Hessen to remain uncontradicted? You owe it to the character of the British nation, to the spirit of your troops, you owe it to the honour of the living, to the memory of the dead, to go into an enquiry, which will distinguish those who have been guilty of misconduct and incurred disgrace. I move "That the house resolve itself into a committee of the whole house to enquire into the causes of the failure of the late expedition to Holland."

Mr. Dundas, Mr. Perceval, and Mr. Addington spoke against the motion—Mr. Bouverie, Mr. Tierney, and Mr. M. A. Taylor in support of it.

I will not, however, pretend to say that this is owing to the want of care of our allies, but rather to their late arrangements, when, contrary to their first plan, they landed all the troops, their own as well as ours, in a croud, so that it was impossible the small track of ground which we occupied, could furnish us with provisions, and we are under the necessity to wait for supplies from England. We were in want of sufficient artillery and horses, and the troops were not yet recovered from a violent sea sickness. Our ammunition being exhausted, we had no means of attack and defence but the bayonet; but through the extreme fatigue of our troops, their retreat began in confusion. The Commander-in-Chief being a prisoner, Lieutenant General Scherebzow killed, and Major General Suthof wounded, the chief command devolved on me. I strove to collect our troops, and retired to our first advantageous position in such a manner, that the enemy found it impossible to follow. Our whole loss in killed, wounded and prisoners, amounts to about 3000 men; but the enemy has lost many more; the prisoners taken by the English and ourselves amounting to above 2000 men," &c.

Mr. Sheridan said, that after having been indulged at such length, he should not trespass long on the patience of the house. He was induced, principally to rise, from two allusions that had been made to him; one by an honorable gentleman near him (Mr. M. A. Taylor), and one by an honorable gentleman opposite (Mr. Addington). His honorable friend had accused him of being mealy-mouthed—an objection which was seldom made to him; for in general he was accused of being too plain a speaker. But he accused him of having taken a line of candor for which he ought to apologize, in saying, that he did not wish to dispossess ministers of their places, and that the country would not desire to see them dispossessed, even though they might disapprove of their conduct in this expedition. He assured the honorable gentleman that he blamed him without reason. He had no such candor. He sincerely wished to see ministers dispossessed for the good of the country; and if any thing that he could urge or say would bring that event about, he would exert every effort in his power. What he had said, was, that in his present motion, he was not prompted to this inquiry *merely* to prove to the country, and to the world, the incapacity of His Majesty's ministers; for it could not redound to national honor or to national benefit to do that, if no other result was to come from it. But the honorable gentleman said that he was confident the opinion of the country was against His Majesty's ministers in this expedition, and he was sincerely desirous of turning them out, and of seeing the gentlemen on that side of the house pass over to the other. In this, said Mr. Sheridan, it is truly creditable to the honorable gentleman, that he would not pass over with us: he would rest in the mid-way; he would rest in that chair, which it requires the greatest talents and the greatest respect to fill. Now, as to the allusion from the honorable

gentleman on the other side, his chief objection to the motion was, that it had not been made in October last, before the failure of the expedition was known, or after it was known, that he had not made it after parliament was adjourned! He had given notice of his motion on the first day after the meeting. It was for ministers to answer for its being so long delayed; since they, and not he, had made the adjournment. It had been objected to him, that he had made use of the word disgrace. Surely in the use of this term he had expressed himself clearly with regard to all the officers and men engaged in the execution of the enterprise, and had limited the word to the planners only. Nothing could be more clear than that the mere failure of a military expedition was not in itself a disgrace:—a town might be besieged and taken, though the garrison had displayed the greatest courage and perseverance. Circumstances might defeat the most obstinate valor; but what he thought necessarily brought disgrace along with it, was, when a country was deluded by promises which were not kept—when a people was tempted by offers of protection to shew themselves, and to manifest their sentiments; and when, instead of the protection held out to them, the planners of an expedition were forced to capitulate for their own retreat. This was what he ascribed to the character of the late expedition. They entered North Holland, holding out to the inhabitants offers of protection, and inviting them to rise. It was true, indeed, that the people did not obey the invitation; but suppose they had, and that trusting to the promise of Great Britain, they had come forward, and that afterwards they had been abandoned, would not the nation have been disgraced? Would it not have been responsible for all the blood that must have flowed from such an issue? If France had invaded Ireland with forty-five thousand men, and had professed, as the British pro-

fessed to the Dutch, that they had come to rescue them from oppression and tyranny—the mere supposition gave rise to a melancholy sentiment; for they had seen, with all their pretended knowledge of human nature, that forty-five thousand men had not induced the Dutch to give up the horrors of French fraternity, or to prefer the friendship of Great Britain to the evils under which they groaned. But would any man say, that if forty-five thousand French had landed in Ireland during the late insurrection there, British influence would have been as great upon the people of Ireland, as French influence, with all its iniquity, was upon the Dutch? If forty-five thousand French had landed in Ireland, had held out offers of protection to the people, and had afterwards been forced to enter into a capitulation for their own escape, would any man say that they would not have been disgraced, and they would not have been answerable for all the horrors, the whippings, the half-hangings, and the whole-hangings, that took place after the rebellion in that miserable country? In like manner, he affixed the term disgrace upon the men who, without the certainty of keeping their word, boasted of their power, and committed the nation by their folly and their capacity. Much had been said about the diversion which this made—and *diversion* was a favorite expression of ministers. Three objects were stated to have been in view in the expedition, two of which were said to have been obtained—he denied this fact. Two of the objects were incompatible—if it was one of our objects to replace the Stadtholder, it could not be our object to take their navy. But it was a diversion: It forced the French to send their troops into Holland, and thus we assisted the allies in another quarter. What! would not the French have sent troops into Holland but for this expedition? Away then with French oppression! They could leave the Dutch then to themselves. But if

the expedition was meant as a diversion, Holland, of all other places, was the worst for a diversion; since by the nature of the country, a very inferior body of troops could sucessfully resist a greatly superior force. He would agree that it was a fair thing to call a descent diversion, where, landing on an enemie's shore, you drew great bodies of men from other quarters, and kept them in play; but it was quite another thing, when, having landed with the professed object of replacing an exiled authority, and having failed, you came home and called it a diversion. You had no right to call it by such a name. But it was to be repeated! What, after the trial which has been made? and never was a trial so completely made of the dispositions of any people: could insanity itself think of repeating the experiment? After having entered the country not merely with a superior force, but with a force, so greatly superior, that if the people were in their hearts at all disposed to come over to the British, they had every temptation — if not a man was found disposed to trust us, could it be believed, that after the experience they had had, they would *now* come, if the experiment were to be repeated? Mr. Sheridan concluded, by expressing his surprise at the conduct of ministers upon this occasion. He did expect that they would endeavor to have made the inquiry nugatory; but that they would have colored their indisposition to enter into the investigation with some plausible pretext. He was disappointed. The house had seen the ground they had taken, and the country would see their motives. He lamented, for the sake of the brave army, and for the honor of the nation, that they thought it consistent with common decency to get rid of the subject by such means.

The house divided; ayes 45; *noes* 216.

FEBRUARY 17.

GRANT TO THE EMPEROR OF GERMANY, &c. FOR THE LOAN TO FOREIGN POWERS.

Mr. Pitt moved for a sum not exceeding 500,000l. to enable His Majesty to make such advances as might be necessary for the purpose of insuring, at an early period, a vigorous co-operation of the Emperor of Germany, the Elector of Bavaria, &c. in the ensuing campaign against the common enemy.

Mr. SHERIDAN—" The honorable gentleman (Mr. Wilberforce) who has just sat down, and said he rose only to save himself from misinterpretation, has declared, that he has no objection to peace. Now I should expect a warmer declaration from that honorable gentleman, when I recollect his conduct on a former occasion. I recollect a time, when he came to rebuke the violence of the minister. [Mr. Sheridan read a motion made by Mr. Wilberforce, for an address to His Majesty, praying, that the government of France might not be made an obstacle to peace, when an opportunity should arrive.] Now, as the honorable gentleman is anxious to escape from the charge of inconsistency, I should expect he would state the reason for this difference in his conduct now. Then the government was a provisional government; a government from its nature not intended to stand; a government of furious jacobins; and yet the honorable gentleman implored to supplicate His Majesty, that it might not be suffered to stand in the way of peace; but now, when it is of a less objectionable description, he justifies his friend from an arrogant, violent, inconsiderate, and I hope he will not find an unfortunate note, refusing to accept peace from such a government. An honorable gentleman who has spoken in the debate put a very just question, whether the country will endure to be governed by words, and not by facts? I admit it right that it should not be so governed, but I unfortunately have the authority of the present government that it is. The honor-

able gentleman spoke with great eloquence, I may say irritation; but never did I see eloquence so misapplied. He has shewn his dexterity in driving the subject from its proper basis; he guides, urges, and inflames the passions of his hearers on jacobinical principles; but he does not shew how they bear on the present question. He has not dared to say, that so far as respects the restoration of the house of Bourbon, we have suffered by the defection of Russia. What that power may still do with regard to La Vendee, or reconciling the people of Ireland to the Union, I do not inquire; but with regard to the great object, the restoration of monarchy in France, we are *minus* the Emperor of Russia; that power may be considered as extinct. Is it then to be endured, that the minister shall come down and ask for a subsidy under such circumstances? Is it to be endured, that we shall be told we are at war for the restoration of monarchy in France, that Russia is pledged to the accomplishment of that purpose, that Russia is the rock on which we stand, that the magnanimous Emperor of Russia, the gallantry of whose troops, and the skill of whose great generals, place them above all the troops and generals in Europe, is all we have to rest on? Is it to be endured, I say, that this rock should prove as brittle as sand, and that those who held this language should come down in a week after, and say, give us two millions and a half to subsidize Germany, and then we shall have a better army than we had with Russia? After such unqualified praise upon Russia, and after her defection, is not such language, I ask, inconsistent, absurd, and preposterous? If Germany possessed these wonderful forces before, why were they not called into action; and if not, why are we to subsidize the *posse comitatus*, the rabble of Germany? But who is the person that applies for this subsidy? As to the Elector of Bavaria, I leave him out of the question. It is the Emperor of Germany. Is there any thing in his

conduct and character to incline us to listen to him. I think not; and for these two reasons: first, he applied once on a false pretence; and, secondly, he failed in performing his stipulated engagement. What was his false pretence? He said he could not open the campaign without the pecuniary assistance of this country; and yet he did do so, and displayed more vigor, energy, and resources than ever. Now, if to this we add experience, and the evidence of facts, when he dared, though bound to this country, to break faith with her, and make a separate peace, does it not furnish a reasonable cause for declining to grant a subsidy to such a power? The honorable gentleman is offended at our connecting the situation of the country, and the present scarcity with the question of war. I do not know to what extent this principle is to be carried. I see no more objection to state the pressure in this particular from the continuance of the war, than there would be to advance the increase of the public debt, the situation of the finances or any other of those reasons so often repeated without its having been ever objected that they were of an improper kind. Sir, I say, there is no more impropriety in urging this argument, than in urging ministers not to press the people too far, but to apportion the burden to their strength to bear it. What has my honorable friend said? We see an opulent commercial prosperity; but look over the country, and we behold barracks and broth-houses, the cause and the effect, the poverty and distress of the country; for surely it will not be contended, but that among the calamities of war are to be reckoned families left without support, and thrown upon charity for subsistence. That the war is unnecessary, as being useless, is self-evident, and nobody can deny it. But, say they, Bonaparte has taken us at an unguarded moment: we do not object to peace, but we have a fear and jealousy of concluding one, except with the house of Bourbon: in a

peace concluded with it we should have confidence, but we can have none in the present government of France. I say, were that event arrived, and the house of Bourbon seated on the throne, the minister should be impeached who would disband a single soldier; and that it would be equally criminal to make peace under a new king as under a republican government, unless her heart and mind were friendly to it. France, as a republic, may be a bad neighbour; but than monarchical France a more foul and treacherous neighbour never was. Is it, then, sufficient to say, let monarchy be restored, and let peace be given to all Europe? I come now, Sir, to the object of the war as expressed in the note. It is there stated, that the restoration of monarchy is the *sine qua non* of present negociation; and then it proceeds to say, that it is possible we may hereafter treat with some other form of government, after it shall be tried by experience and the evidence of facts. What length of time this trial may require, is impossible to ascertain; yet we have, I acknowledge, something of experience here by which we may form a kind of conjecture.

"At the time of the negociation at Lisle, the then republican government had stood two years and a half. Previous to that time, it had been declared improper to enter into negociation with it; but, from experience and the evidence of facts, ministers discovered that it was then become good and proper to treat with; and yet so it happened, that, immediately after this judgment in its favor, it crumbled to pieces. Here then we have a tolerable rule to judge by, and may presume, on the authority of this case, that something more than two years and a half must expire before any new government will be pronounced stable. The note, Sir, then proceeds to pay an handsome compliment to the line of princes who maintained peace at home, and to round the period handsomely, it should have added, tranquillity abroad; but instead of this are substituted respect

and consideration, by which we are to understand exactly what is meant by the consideration with which the note is subscribed, being equivalent to 'I am, Sir, with the highest respect and sincerest enmity, yours,'—for, Sir, this consideration which the line of princes maintained, consisted in involving all the powers within their reach and influence in war and contentions. The note then proceeds to state, that this restoration of monarchy would secure to France the uninterrupted possession of her ancient territory; by which we are to understand, I suppose, we would renounce our Quiberon expeditions. In this note, Sir, the gentlemen seem to have clubbed their talents, one found grammar, another logic, and a third some other ingredient; but it is not strange, that they should all forget that the house of Bourbon, instead of maintaining peace and tranquillity in Europe, was always the disturber of both? In the very last transaction of monarchical France, I mean her conduct in the American war, His Majesty's speech begins thus:—'France, the disturber of the tranquillity of Europe.'—But were a person to judge hereafter, from the history of the present time, of the war we carried on, and the millions we expended for the monarchy of France, he would be led to conclude that it was our nearest and dearest friend. Is there any thing then in the knowledge of human nature, from which we can infer, that with the restoration of monarchy in France, a total change in the principles of the people would take place? or that Ministers of the new king would renounce them? What security have we, that a change of principles will take place in the restored monarch, and that he will not act upon the principles cherished by his ancestors? But if this security is effected by maiming France, does the right honorable gentleman think that the people of France would submit to it? Does he not know that even the emigrants have that partiality for the grandeur of their country, that even they

cannot restrain their joy at Republican victories? But with regard to the practicability of the course to be pursued, the right honorable gentleman says, he is looking forward to a time when there shall be no dread of jacobin principles. I ask whether he does not think, from the fraud, oppression, tyranny, and cruelty with which the conduct of France has marked them, that they are not now nearly dead, extinct, and detested? But who are the Jacobins? Is there a man in this country who has at any time opposed ministers, who has resisted the waste of public money and the prostitution of honors, that has not been branded with the name? The Whig Club are jacobins (a dead silence). Of this there can be no doubt, for a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Windham) on that account struck his name off the list. The friends of the people are jacobins—(A cry of "Hear! Hear!"). I am one of the friends of the people, and consequently am a jacobin. The honorable gentleman pledged himself never to treat with jacobin France until we had

Toto certatum est corpore regni.

Now he did treat with France at Lisle and Paris, but perhaps there were not Jacobins in France at either of these times. You then, the friends of the people, are the jacobins. I do think, Sir, jacobin principles never existed much in this country; and even admitting they had, I say they have been found so hostile to true liberty, that in proportion as we love it, and whatever may be said, I must still consider liberty an inestimable blessing), we must hate and detest these principles. But more, I do not think they even exist in France; they have there died the best of deaths; a death I am more pleased to see than if it had been effected by a foreign force; they have stung themselves to death, and died by their own poison. But the honorable gentleman, arguing

from experience of human nature, tells us that jacobin principles are such, that the mind that is once infected with them, no quarantine, no cure can cleanse. Now if this be the case, and that there are, according to Mr. Burke's statement, eighty thousand incorrigible Jacobins in England, we are in a melancholy situation; the right honorable gentleman must continue the war while one of the present generation remains, and consequently we cannot for that period expect those rights to be restored to us, to the suspension and restrictions of which the honorable gentleman attributes the suppression of these principles. A pretty consolation this truly! Now I contend, that they do not exist in France to the same extent as before, or nearly. If this, then, be the case, what danger can be apprehended? But if this, then, be true, and that Bonaparte, the child and champion of jacobin principles, as he is called, be resolved to uphold them, upon what ground does the honorable gentleman presume to hope for the restoration of the house of Bourbon? So far I have argued on the probability of the object; but the honorable gentleman goes on, and says, there is no wish to restore the monarchy without the consent of the people. Now if this be the case, is it not better to leave the people to themselves; for if armies are to interfere, how can we ascertain that it is a legitimate government established with the pure consent of the people. As to Buonaparte, whose character has been represented as marked with fraud and insincerity, has he not made treaties with the emperor and observed them? Is it not his interest to make peace with us? Do you not think he feels it? And can you suppose, that if peace were made, he has not power to make it be observed by the people of France? And do not you think that the people of France are aware that an infraction of that peace would bring with it a new order of things, and a renewal of those calamities from which they are now desirous to escape? But,

Sir, on the character of Buonaparte I have better evidence than the intercepted letters. I appeal to Carnot, whether the instructions given with respect to the conduct to be observed to the emperor, were not moderate, open, and magnanimous?—(Here Mr. Sheridan read an extract from Carnot's pamphlet, in support of his assertion.)—With regard to the late note, in answer to his proposal to negociate, it is foolish, insulting, and undignified. It is evidence to me, that the honorable gentlemen themselves do not believe his character to be such as they describe it; for, if they did, they must know their language would irritate such a mind; the passions will mix themselves with reason in the conduct of men, and they cannot say that they will not yet be obliged to treat with Buonaparte. I am warranted in saying this, for I do believe in my heart, that since the defection of Russia, ministers have been repenting of their answer; I say so, because I do not consider them so obstinate and headstrong as to persevere with as much ardour for the restoration of monarchy as when they were pledged with Russia. There was not a nation in Europe which ministers did not endeavour to draw into the war. On what was such conduct founded, but on jacobinical principles? Indeed ministers, by negociating at one time with a jacobinical government in France, plainly proved they were not so hostile to its principles as they would now wish to appear. Prussia and Austria, as well as this country, have acted also on jacobinical principles. The conduct of this country towards Ireland has been perfectly jacobinical. How, then, can we define these principles, when persons who would not disavow them fall by some fatality into an unavoidable acknowledgment of them. The objections that have been raised to peace have been entirely jacobinical. If we seek for peace, it must be done in the spirit of peace. We are not to make it a question, who was the first aggressor, or endeavour to throw the blame that may attach to us on our enemy. Such circumstances

should be consigned to oblivion, as tending to no one useful purpose. France, in the beginning of the revolution, had conceived many romantic notions; she was to put an end to war, and produce, by a pure form of government, a perfectibility of mind which before had never been realised. The monarchs of Europe, seeing the prevalence of these new principles, trembled for their thrones. France, also, perceiving the hostility of kings to her projects, supposed she could not be a republic without the overthrow of thrones. Such has been the regular progress of cause and effect; but who was the first aggressor, with whom the jealousy first arose, need not now be a matter of discussion. Both the republic, and the monarchs who opposed her, acted on the same principles: the latter said they must exterminate jacobins, and the former that they must destroy monarchs. From this source have all the calamities of Europe flowed; and it is now a waste of time and argument to inquire farther into the subject. Now, Sir, let us come to matter of fact; has not France renounced and reprobated those jacobin principles, which created her so many enemies? Are not all her violent invectives against regular governments come into disesteem? Has not the Abbe Sicyes, who wrote in favor of monarchy, has not Buonaparte condemned the jacobinical excesses of the revolution in the most pointed manner; the very men who have had so large a share in the formation of the present government? But I maintain that Buonaparte himself is also a friend to peace. There is in his correspondence with the ministers of this country a total renunciation of jacobinical principles. In the dread, therefore, of these, I can see no argument for the continuance of war. A man who is surprised at the revolution of sentiment in individuals or nations shews but little experience. Such instances occur every day. Neither would a wise man always attach to principles the most serious consequences.

Left to themselves, the absurd and dangerous would soon disappear; and wisdom establish herself only the more secure on their ruins. I am a friend to peace at this time, because I think Buonaparte would be as good a friend and neighbour to this country as ever were any of the Bourbons. I think also that there can be no time when we can hope to have better terms. If the King of Prussia should join France, such an alliance would greatly change the state of things; and from her long and honorable neutrality, in spite of the remonstrance and entreaties of this country, an event of that kind is by no means unlikely to happen. It must be considered also, that the First Consul of France must feel no little portion of resentment towards this country, arising from the indignity with which his overtures of negociation have been treated; it is not improbable that, to satisfy his revenge, he would make large sacrifices to the house of Austria, that he might contend more successfully against this country. Such are my fears and opinions; but I am unhappily in the habit of being numbered with the minority, and therefore their consequences are considerably diminished. But there have been occasions when the sentiments of the minority of this house have been those of the people at large: one, for instance, when a war was prevented with Russia concerning Oczakow. The minority told the minister, that the sentiments of the country were contrary to those of the majority: and the fact justified them in the assertion; the dispute was abandoned. In the year 1797, the opinions of the minority on peace were those of the people, and I believe the same coincidence exists now upon the same subject."

For the motion 162; *against it* 19.

FEBRUARY 19.

SUSPENSION OF THE HABEAS CORPUS ACT.

The second reading of this bill was moved by the Attorney General.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that he was more eager on the opening of the debate for arguments in support of the motion than he could be now, as it was better to speak after strange arguments, such as he had just heard, than after no arguments at all. He listened with all respect and attention, as he was in hopes to find from the declaration of a gentleman (Mr. H. Lascelles) that the importance of this subject would strike the house, and produce an ample discussion. He observed that that gentleman just after quitted the house. That honorable gentleman expressed his satisfaction at the increasing loyalty of the nation, and thought that much of that loyalty was owing to the wise measures of administration. The inference from which, in his opinion, was, that the greater the number of those men that were free from jacobin principles, the more should they be entitled to prosecution. He would not wonder if on such reasoning it was said, that because the minority of the house of commons was inferior in number to the majority, the minority should be *gagged*. "That honorable gentleman strengthens his argument by adding, that because the majority of the kingdom does not steal, he would repeal the laws against stealing, and therefore infers, that notwithstanding the loyalty of the many, the suspension should not be repealed on account of the few. On our part it is answered, that if we wanted to repeal the sedition and treason laws, such an argument would be good; and I am sure, from such arguments, that he could not give the subject that full attention it required." He heard an honorable gentleman (Mr. Sturges), whom he hoped to hear often, argue the nature of French principles, observing, that the French revolution

was different from every other. He would remark, in turn, that the example of those principles cannot operate on the people of England. Their humane minds were not susceptible of an infection so terrible in its effects. And here was the whole bearing of the question; and on this consideration we were called upon to suspend the Habeas Corpus act, to remove the main-stay of the British constitution. Though there might at one time have been a number of men infected with jacobin principles, yet gentlemen on the other side of the house would admit, that the examples of perfidy, cruelty, and atrocity on the part of France, might have since brought those principles into hatred and detestation. "But some honorable gentlemen are of opinion, that jacobinism is of such a nature that it cannot be changed. The practices of those very gentlemen might inform them, that the practices which are called jacobinical are not altogether of such an incorrigible kind. The right hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer at one time was very eager in Parliamentary Reform, and thought no good administration could ever be formed without such a reform. Yet now, as if he had performed *quarantine*, he had changed his principles and opinions, and finds a very good administration made up from such materials. Another right honorable gentleman (Mr. Windham), now on the right hand of his right honorable friend, once said of him, that all his robes of state, and all his pomp of eloquence were not sufficient to conceal his filthy *dowlas*, or render him a fit ally for him; he too has changed his principles!" In reasoning on the principles of government, he did not think it fair to conclude, that because a corrupt people, debased under a despotic state, had broken and then dashed about the chains that held them, the people of England, accustomed to a mild and beneficent government, should be so restrained that their liberties should be ripped up and curtailed from mere unfounded suspicion. It

could not be inferred, that because a wolf had committed depredation on the fold, a man should take down his dwelling, when the remedy would be to chain up this animal: or because the fire had burnt down a wooden bridge, that we should take down one built of solid stone. Nor should it be inferred, by parity of reasoning, that because the licentiousness of France had demolished all that was excellent in human institutions, the freedom of Englishmen should do the same mischief; for in all those cases it was the same. He could not forget the English constitution. The people of England were not slaves broke loose from their chains, not rushing from despotism into anarchy and disorder. Of the votes of the commons he always had a respectful and due opinion; but with respect to committees selected from the minister's friends, he could not but observe, that with prejudices on their minds, and a bias from their connections, it was hardly possible that a just decision could be obtained; and such ever struck him on the perusal of the reports of those select committees. He had also the same dislike to another report (in the lords), in which were depicted pikes and such things as frightfully fill the imagination with dread and horror. The learned gentleman (the Attorney General) seemed little disposed to pay any attention to the verdict of a jury. This jury had negatived the report of a select committee, and he preferred that verdict to the reports. The opinion of the judge (late Chief Justice Eyre) said on that occasion, that this mighty conspiracy turned out to be a conspiracy perfectly insignificant, a conspiracy without men, money, leaders, and even destitute of designs in their schemes: their rendezvous a back-garret; their arms a few muskets, and their exchequer about 10*l.* 15*s.* Such was its formidable appearance, and so inactive, that the learned judge said they even wanted zeal in the undertaking. He then called the attention of the house to the situation of those

who were imprisoned under the act. And here he would ask, whether the Attorney General, who was versed in law and history, had ever read or heard of sham-plots and conspiracies; and if he had, was it not possible for them to return again? These were the instruments by which ministers were enabled to carry on the war, to exercise a corrupt influence, and, by alarming the landed and monied interests with risings of the people, to govern the country with a system of terror. Let no gentleman then ask, what motives can influence such measures, when it is to such measures ministers owe all their power. And is it not surprising to hear gentlemen talk of liberty of speech remaining (in allusion to Mr. Wilberforce), when fifty persons cannot meet to talk together? Whatever may be said in favour of our remaining liberties, he would maintain that the act of habeas corpus was the chief. A gentleman more remarkable for the pith and vigor of his expressions than for the neatness of them, said, that "the breath of the nostrils of administration lay in Mr. Pitt's tongue;" and he would say, that however the muscle or sinew lay in other parts, the heart's blood of the constitution lay in the act of habeas corpus. "For if ministers can commit without any other process than their own suspicion, this foul principle may be pushed to the most dangerous extent; and if a man is once considered as a leading man in society of any kind, he may be exposed to attack and arrest from suspicion alone. An honorable gentleman (Mr. Sturges) has given a precedent from the reign of King William, by no means applicable to the present period, and which, adopted as such, must fall with a double edge." He was astonished to hear no difference made between the times. The majority of the nation at that period were jacobites. "Is there a man that will not confess the jacobins are a contemptible minority? The jacobites were composed of the nobility, the landed interest, and were formidable in their principles and oppo-

sition to King William, and many of them suffered on the scaffold. The act made at the time of the conspiracy on the life of the then monarch, was a specific act to confine those whose moral guilt was ascertained; but this act shuts up every man upon vague suspicion. The whole of the arguments of administration rest upon the existence of jacobin principles in France, and so long the act now proposed is to be continued." The absurdity of this was equally astonishing and alarming; it was a satisfaction to him that it was not his. Mr. Sheridan then noticed the argument of Mr. Canning on a former night, respecting the conduct of the nation in the case of King James II. He here observed, that the honorable gentleman did not reason correctly; for he assumed a fact, where he (Mr. Sheridan) only put a supposition. The repeal of this act was impracticable in either case of sedition or tranquillity. In the former it would be urged, that it was necessary to restore peace, and in the latter case it will be always, as now demanded, would you remove the means by which the country has so much benefited? Mr. Sheridan then reviewed the state of Ireland under Lord Fitzwilliam, and said, the outrages, cruelties, and atrocities, were not occasioned by French principles, but by the rooted hatred of the people to British councils. The effects of such councils were predicted by Earl Fitzwilliam; all that rebellion which burst out in the small space of twenty-four hours, like characters written in lemon juice on a sheet of white paper, and held to the fire, as described by the Secretary at War. I might be permitted to ask—Heh, Mr. Secretary at War, where did you come by those amorous mysteries? for they belong not to your office, though you are accustomed to read dispatches in cypher. He shewed and proved before that the discontents in Ireland were not the offspring of French principles, but resentments strongly engraved on the hearts of the Irish against this coun-

try. He then deprecated the minister from such means of outrage to the loyalty of the nation, whose security was not less lodged in the hearts than in the arms of its volunteer corps. The country was no less upon its guard in its mind than it was in fact, and had little at any time to dread from a few contemptible ruffians in a cellar, against the security or laws of the country. This power in the hands of ministers was absurd; yet, he was sorry to see it existing, as he would wish to guard against the effects it might produce. He regretted to read the reign of even Titus, and was sorry almost not to see that reign a tissue of crimes; that despotism might be discredited wherever it did exist. He then entered on the abuse of the power lodged in the hands of ministers, evidenced in the case of Colonel Despard, and the infamous conduct of Aris, the keeper of the prison. Another abuse of power was under the alien bill; this bill, said to be for political purposes, was perverted into an instrument of family protection, as persons who had paid their addresses to the daughters of gentlemen were on that account taken up under this bill, and sent out of the kingdom. He was ready to acquit the noble Duke (Portland) at the head of that office, of being capable, from his character or temper, of such a proceeding; but such, under him, was one of the abuses made of it. He had to mention another abuse, which, though difficult to relate without ridicule, yet shewed the spirit of this power in the hands of ministers. A man of the name of Patterson, who had a shop at Manchester, kept a tilted cart, over which he subscribed the names of Pitt and Patterson. The man, who was known to have no partner in his trade, was asked what he meant by the name of Pitt on his cart, as he had no share in his business? "Ah," replied he, "if he has no share in the business, he has a large share in the profit of it." On this he was taken up, committed to Cold-Bath-Fields prison, but some time after liberated, with a strict

order not to go within thirty miles of Manchester. Ridiculous as this appeared, it proved serious to the man, and was the ruin of his business! On all the circumstances no new case had been made out why this act should be continued, but many have shewn that it should be repealed. Gentlemen should at least defer the farther consideration for a few days, until in decency they could make out some means that would appear plausible, and give, at least, a formal pretext for their proceedings.

Ayes 98; *noes* 12.

JUNE 10.

BILL FOR PUNISHING AND PREVENTING ADULTERY.

The Master of the Rolls moved the order of the day for the house going into a committee on an engrossed bill from the lords, for punishing and preventing adultery.

Mr. SHERIDAN.—"There is no man, I am persuaded, Sir, in this house who is not ready to agree with me, that this is a subject which deserves to be gravely and maturely considered. I am aware too, that when professions are held out, that great alterations may be made in a committee upon a bill; it is not the most favorable time to rise in opposition to that bill before it goes into such committee; because it may be said to those who so oppose it, that the very points to which they object may be those which it is intended in the commitment to alter and amend. Sir, I shall very much regret if another opportunity shall be afforded for going into the discussion of such a bill as the present; but if there should be, I shall certainly state my objections to every part of it more at large than I shall think it necessary to do at present. The question now before us is, whether we shall go into a committee? To this proposition it is wished that the house should be induced to accede, by the hope that the alterations which may be made may render the bill more

acceptable and more moderate. Now, Sir, I take upon me to assert, that no gentleman who has spoken upon the subject has held out any grounds at all to make us believe that such can be the result. We have heard from some, that the law is not to be as it is; from others we have heard sketches of clauses; from others we have heard general outlines and opinions; but all who have spoken have shewn that the bill cannot pass in its present shape. Sir, that the laws with respect to adultery ought not to remain as they are, may be true. But what I contend is this, that it has not been proved that any great or general review of the subject can proceed from such a bill as this. That, upon maturer consideration with the reverend prelates, something better may not be produced, I am not prepared to deny. But there appears to me to have been an evident improvidence, a shameful negligence, on the part of the authors of this measure. It seems as if it had been produced in scorn and contempt, and in defiance of all knowledge and experience. It ill became the authors of it to pass by that first and greatest authority, of whose assistance they ought to have availed themselves. But the bill comes to us in another way. I know that it is not parliamentary to allude to what passes in another house; but I shall contend that the bill which comes to us by unanimous vote, or by a large majority in its favor, would come with a greater weight than one passed by a very small majority.—Recollecting then all these things, we cannot, I contend, be accused of impropriety or presumption in saying we will pause where we are, and oppose going into a bill which appears to us so utterly incorrigible. But there are one or two points upon which I wish to make some observations. When any measure is proposed to a legislative assembly, there are three questions which a prudent legislator will ask himself. First, Whether the measure is necessary? Second, Whether it is likely to be efficacious? And, third, Whether it is

likely to produce greater evils than those which it is meant to remedy? I will pass by the two last, and proceed to the first. Is the present measure necessary? What! will you extend the penal code, and not prove first that the crime which you propose to punish has increased? Mischievous, indeed, must be the consequence. But, Sir, in point of fact, and in fairness of reasoning, the crime in the present case, so far from having increased, has been proved to have diminished. The learned gentleman opposite me, in going over a period of thirty years, tells us, that in the first ten there were forty-four divorces; in the second ten twenty-three; and in the third ten fifty-two. But to form a right judgment, we must compare the increased number of marriages, the increase of population, and, undoubtedly, the increase in wealth of the country. The fair inference to be drawn from this comparison will then be, that the crime has diminished. But, says an honorable gentleman, it is not proper that the crime should exist at all; true: but what I demand from those who argue in favor of the present bill is, to shew me that what they propose to remove has not operated as a check upon the commission of the crime. This substituted law of honor, which induces the man to marry the woman he has seduced, has been strongly inveighed against; but I desire those who so inveigh against it, to shew me whether it has not been one of the causes of the crime having diminished. Will the removal of this law decrease it? Sir, what I complain of most is, that what is now proposed is all matter of experiment, and that such a proposition, when the crime has been proved to be diminishing, is, to say no more of it, extremely desperate. The honorable gentleman opposite me think it an evil that men should set up this law of honor, and he prefers open and avowed vice. Sir, I should think strangely of the morality and honor of that man who, having seduced a married woman, should afterwards scoff at her credulity, leave her to

shame and sorrow, send her out an exile and a wanderer, and abandon her to all the horrors of mockery and insult. I should say to him who prefers that kind of morality, that he ought indeed to have a great stock of religion in his heart to reconcile such principles and practice to his conscience. I should say, that such conduct was a grosser violation of all moral feeling, than the very act of adultery itself. The honorable gentleman has urged, with great truth, the obligations the country is under to certain illustrious personages, for the example of domestic virtues which they have uniformly afforded. Is it not true too, I would ask, that the women of this country were never more correct in their conduct than at present? Is there any man, I would also ask, who, when it is attempted to be contended that the days of Charles II. were purity to these, does not know that assertion to be an untruth? If that be the case, is it no slight thing to throw out this unmannerly and unmanly slander upon the morality of the country? Is it nothing to hold forth that the example which the illustrious personages upon the throne have for so long a period afforded has produced no good effect; and that, instead of having been attended with any beneficial consequences, we are forced, after a period of forty years, to make a law to stop the progress of adultery? The honorable gentleman has described a husband treating his wife ill, and has added, that if a seducer had not intervened, the wife, by her gentleness, her meekness, and her virtues, might at last have reclaimed the husband. Sir, that there would be frequent examples of this forbearance and perseverance on the part of the wife, I am not yet prepared to admit. But the honorable gentleman says, ought not the seducer to be punished? Yet he cannot be, if this ill usage is proved against the husband. Sir, I will not answer, whether the seducer ought to be punished, because I contend that he cannot be under this bill. A learned gentleman has talked of ex-

emplary damages been given. I do not pretend to be much of a lawyer; but, in my opinion, talking of exemplary damages in civil actions, is talking exemplary nonsense. Who told juries that they were to be the *Custodes Morum?*—I will not surmise who pressed this into the minds of juries, but he who states this doctrine is responsible for the effect it produces. Sir, I know it will be said that these objectionable parts may be removed in a committee—and this is what I complain of, that these bills come to us in a shape so little resembling that in which they are to pass, that, like the crafty tyrant in Shakespeare, they may say to us—

'Judge not by what I am, but what I shall become!'

Sir, a judge may think it proper to tell a jury, that twenty thousand pounds, that a whole fortune is not sufficient to repair the injury a husband has sustained.—A jury, however, may think otherwise; and only give two. The same man may afterwards by the present bill come under an indictment before the same judge, who may deem it to be his duty to make up for this supposed deficiency on the part of the juries; and this is one of the evils which this bill may tend to produce. A learned friend of mine, who has argued in favor of the measure, has talked of the harmonious whole—but what is the fact? Is there not this anomaly? The seducer is only to be prosecuted by one individual; and who is this individual? the husband, who, in other parts of the bill, may be supposed to be in collusion. How many years of solitary confinement the seducer is to be punished with, we are not told; but, on his trial for the misdemeanor, he calls in the husband to cross-examine him with respect to his treatment of his wife; to go over his whole life from the commencement of his marriage, to question him relative to every part of his conduct. The result of this will, I contend, be such a disinclination, that few husbands will consent to put themselves in a situation

to proceed to such indictments; of course then there can be no divorce: but if he does proceed to an indictment, and the seducer should make out that the husband has afforded provocation to his wife; in that case there can be no divorce. Here then will be this strange case. The public wrong will be proved; the adultery will be proved; the seducer, however, will not be punished; the wife will not be punished; and where then will be the harmonious whole? Sir, my objection to the measure is, that it is dashing rashly, and desperately at experiment; and is there any man, I would ask, who would consent to change the morals of our countrywomen for those of the women of any other nation in the world? I say then, Sir, that the bill is unnecessary; I hope it will not be suffered to proceed to another discussion; but if it does, I shall go into it more at length, and I pledge myself to shew that the principle of it is bad; that it will be unjust in its operation; that it is cruel, unchristian-like, and severe, and in an inverse proportion to the degree of guilt; that it is hostile to the doctrines of the Protestant church; and that it is calculated to increase that evil which it proposes to remedy. For these reasons, Sir, I give the bill my most hearty and decided opposition."

The house divided; for the chairman leaving the chair 104; *against it* 143.

JUNE 23.

MONASTIC INSTITUTION BILL.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he had been listening with great attention to every person who had spoken on the subject now before the house, and particularly to the two honorable and learned gentlemen who had taken part in it. He should neither follow them nor any other person in the detail of their arguments, but endeavor to bring the question now

before the house into as narrow a compass as the thing was capable of. By the question, he meant the substance of that on which the decision of the house was to be taken. The honorable and learned gentleman who had just sat down, had gone, he apprehended, considerably beside the question, which really was this: "Whether there does exist at this moment, in the conduct of the Catholics in this country, any ground to blame them? Whether, in a word, any body could fairly impute to any of them any misconduct whatever?"—No gentleman had yet met this question, and yet every gentleman seemed to admit that this was the point for the discussion of the house. One honorable member said, the house should not proceed unless they saw actual misconduct. On what ground was the house to decide that this measure was necessary? Were they to proceed on general rumour or hear-say? Were they to proceed on a regulating bill, merely upon confidence in those who said it was necessary? Or, would the advocates of the bill come at once to that short issue, "was there any misconduct in the Catholics that rendered this or any regulation necessary?" Whether monasteries should or should not exist, he should not at present argue; neither should he now say any thing upon the question, whether parliament should or should not at any time prevent them. These were points that appeared to him to be foreign to the question before the house, because that was a question of regulation. What he first should humbly insist upon was this: that there ought to be made out a case shewing the necessity of this measure, or of some measure, before the house agreed to any alteration in the law upon the subject. The learned gentleman who spoke last, had called this an enabling bill; he did not think that learned gentleman had perused it very accurately, nor very attentively examined what the law was already upon this point; if he had, he would have found there was no necessity for this

enabling bill. As to most of the objects of the bill, or rather those which were supposed to be the objects of it, and their residence, he must observe there was no power to remove them, for they were natural-born subjects of this realm, and for the same reason they would not be put under the operation of the alien act. But there was one great mistake which the friends of the bill fell into, that of confounding the idea of vows with legal obligations in these nunneries, or monastic institutions; whereas there was, in this country, no such thing as a legal obligation attached to a vow. There was no legal power of attaching any civil punishment to those who broke their vows in this country. Any number of ladies might meet together, and make a vow that they would die old maids; but they could not be bound by law to observe that vow. In other countries, if a nun run away, or married, she was punishable by the civil power; but here there was no such law, and therefore the idea was idle of making an alteration in the law upon that subject, because upon that subject there was no law. Many compliments had been paid to the honorable baronet who brought in this bill. No man could think higher of his virtues and talents than he did; but on the present occasion he saw no room for compliments on the delicacy and forbearance of the framers of the bill; for sure he was that it was fraught with every thing that must insult the pride and alarm the feelings of the Roman Catholics of this country, than which description of the community none was more exemplary in their conduct as men and as subjects. It was telling the Roman Catholic gentlemen, that we understood their interests, and could direct their feelings better than themselves, and that we knew best how and where their children should be educated. But, after all, in what does this delicacy, so much panegyrized, consist?—in abstaining from specifying particular places, or particular persons, and from exposing those whom we have taken under

our protection to popular indignation and rage. This delicacy and forbearance would have no such effect—on the contrary, he would contend that it would expose both foreign and English Roman Catholics to be victims of popular fury. The measure must be felt as such by those who recollect the horrors that disgraced the year 1780. Under the pretext of religious alarm, what was then sought for but plunder, massacre, and firings? If once aroused, who can control the savage madness of such a mob, or prevent its running into a general undistinguishing cry against the whole body of Roman Catholics? This reflection must make the promoters of the measure shudder at the consequences which it is more than possible it may produce. At least it should induce the house to pause before they proceeded too hastily to adopt it, or any measure that might risk such horrible and incalculable mischief. But it will still be said there is no harm, no mischief to be dreaded from it. He would ask, where was its necessity? Without a necessity, a well-proved necessity, no legislative act should be proceeded to. But of late every gentleman has become a law-maker, whether new laws were called for or not. If laws are enacted without the plea of necessity, or of some evident good to be derived from it, the multiplying of such laws is only spreading imbecility over the rest of your statutes. Without a strong case were previously made out, he must therefore again entreat gentlemen not to lend their countenance to a measure which, if duly considered, may be found pregnant with the most horrible mischiefs. When the mob in the year 1780 rose against the Catholics, they had parliament against them; for parliament was then employed in repealing laws that bore hard upon the Roman Catholics; at present they would find the house of commons, at least, countenancing injurious suspicions of that class of their fellow-subjects. He was induced to oppose this bill, because he did not wish the Catholics to

be exposed to popular indignation. Would any man, who remembered what happened in 1780, tell him there was no danger to be apprehended from a furious, plundering, desolating and proscribing mob, with the cry of "No popery?" Would any man tell him there was no probability that any designing, artful demagogue, should arise and pretend that the present high price of provisions was owing to the Catholics in this country? And who would answer for the consequences? It was not enough to say that the people were now more enlightened than they were; a mob, whenever they were put in motion, had but one way of proceeding, and that was to take a catch-word, and, under it, to plunder and destroy wherever they proceeded. All this he saw at least as a possibility, by encouraging these legislative provisions without necessity. It had been said, that in the time of James II. there was but one Catholic in this country to an hundred Protestants, and that the number was the same, or nearly the same, now; but did any man seriously mean to say that the danger at this time from the Catholic religion was the same as at that time? He had heard a good deal said in praise of toleration, as it was called, in this country. He confessed freely he was almost induced to hate the word, because it was but another name for mitigating persecution. The true sentence of justice was "Freedom of worship." As to the provision in the bill which authorises magistrates to visit and inspect the Roman Catholic seminaries, he could think of nothing that more rudely violated all decorum and delicacy. Why not visit and inspect the places of education of other sects; or why hold out the falsehood that the Catholics were more to be feared? It was wonderful how the framers of the bill seemed to be influenced only by shadows and alarms, and never thought of any thing like proofs to justify the necessity of the measure. How came it to pass that on this occasion they were so regardless of the evi-

dence of facts? He had facts, however, to adduce, though he must beg pardon of those new legislators for attempting to obtrude any, as they seemed to them to be wholly unnecessary. Mr. Sheridan then proceeded to read a number of documents, by which it appeared that all mistresses of the Roman Catholic boarding-schools had been asked the question, whether they had any protestant young ladies under their care, or whether they were in the habit of admitting them as pupils? The uniform answer was, none; none; never. They were also asked if they offered to educate, or did really educate Protestant young women for nothing? They were all anxious to be exculpated from this charge of charity: they never were guilty of such a thing, except in one, or perhaps two instances, and then the young women were Catholics, not Protestants. A foolish alarm had also been sent abroad respecting the number of emigrant clergy now in this country; they were said to amount to five thousand; and persons had even been absurd enough to say, that in one country alone they had converted two thousand housemaids. How this wonderful conversion was brought about, he could not well conceive. The emigrant priests spoke but little English, and our housemaids, he believed, spoke as little French. Besides, it was nothing to the purpose to bring in the conduct of the emigrant priests on this occasion, as the bill in question did not go to affect them in the least. In no instance, indeed, had any argument been urged to support the bill as it really stood. The framers of it, indeed, pretended that it was "A bill to explain, amend, and render more effectual the thirty-first of His Majesty;" but when examined it would rather appear to be "A bill to confound, deform, and render nugatory that act." The honorable gentleman next proceeded to shew that, out of the seventeen convents that were now established in this country, only nine of them took in pupils. They were the only schools to which

Roman Catholic gentlemen could send their children to be educated, and was it not better that they should be educated here, under the eyes of their parents, and under the vigilant inspection of government, than in France, or any other foreign country, where their political as well as moral principles were supposed to run such risk of being corrupted? He was ready to confess that there was, in his opinion, a great deal of prejudice in the minds of many well-meaning persons in this country upon the subject; and that of supposing the Catholic to be a worse religion than others to a state in the present state of things, was only a political and moral falsehood. Upon the subject of the supposed operation of the funds of these monasteries being more than a match for the church of England, he said that appeared to him to be absolutely ridiculous. He said it should seem as if these poor Catholics possessed all their former wealth and splendour, and that all their lands and goods had not been turned over with the cathedrals to our church—as if Harry the Eighth had never stripped them of any thing, whereas he left them little but their vows to feed upon; nor have they had any other food by the rules of law in this country since the reformation: and therefore, to suppose that a few obscure nuns, living in a garret, could, by scattering their wealth in this country, eclipse our established church in splendor, and thereby become dangerous, appeared to him to be absolutely ridiculous. Indeed, it was much to be apprehended, that this bill had its origin in a mixture of other motives than those that were merely religious; or it might possibly arise out of a controversial spirit. This spirit had lately shewn itself, more particularly at Winchester, where the emigrants were not very popular, as perhaps it was natural for the people to be somewhat angry at seeing the king's castle there garrisoned only by French priests. Mr. Sheridan then mentioned the controversy that was now carried on between Dr. Sturges and Mr. Milner, on both of whom he be-

stowed the praise of erudition and abilities. Dr. Sturges, he was sure, did not want parliamentary assistance to aid him in refuting Mr. Milner's doctrines, though the latter indeed was rather a formidable antagonist. He next instanced the cruel treatment received by M. l'Abbé Fleury in Hampshire, who had been torn from his home by an order from the Secretary of State, though it was not yet known what crime had been laid to his charge, and the most respectable testimonies had been given to his character by gentlemen who had an opportunity of observing it for seven years. All these papers and documents he was ready to lay before the House; and he hoped their justice and candour would not think it too much, that this evidence should be inquired into before the bill was farther proceeded on. It was merely his wish, that a committee might be appointed to inspect them, and report whether they saw any necessity for the measure. Nothing, in his mind, could be more inauspicious than such a bill at this time, when we were about to receive into the country a number of representatives from Ireland, upon an idea of an union of interest as well as political shew, an Union with a country three-fourths of whose inhabitants were Catholics. He concluded with observing, that this bill was not worthy of being, as it were, the legacy of the last English parliament to its successors; that it was hurtful to the feelings of the Catholics, incompatible with our professions of liberality, not countenanced by the spirit of our constitution, the basis of which was freedom, and possibly introductory of great public mischief, as well as private vexation. Under these considerations he should end with a proposition, "That the house do appoint a committee to enquire into the state of these religious houses, &c. and proceed no farther until it had some evidence upon the subject, upon which to deliberate;" for which purpose he would move "that this examination be adjourned to Monday next."

For the Speaker leaving the chair 52; *against it* 24.

JUNE 27.

OVERTURES FROM BUONAPARTE FOR PEACE.

Mr. SHERIDAN—"Sir, I rise in pursuance of the notice I had the honor of giving on Tuesday last, in order to state the grounds on which I rest my proposition, of the necessity of a call of the house on Monday fortnight. I am aware how very unpleasant and inconvenient a motion of this kind is at all times, unless there exist very strong grounds for it. When I mentioned my intention on Tuesday of bringing forward such a motion, it was observed, that the intelligence recently arrived from France, and on which I founded the necessity, was nothing more than mere rumor. I might have been disposed to have admitted the justice of the objection; but, Sir, it is with the deepest regret I inform the house, that I now understand government has received the fullest and most authentic accounts of the truth, in every particular, of that disastrous intelligence. I find that the events which before existed only in rumor have taken place, and that the alarming consequences of them appear in a much stronger light than by the first doubtful statement of them. It is not my intention to take advantage of the opportunity the subject affords me, by going much at large into general topics of argument and observation, referring to the impropriety and impolicy of carrying on the war with the Republic of France, or of the necessity of an immediate peace and reconciliation with her present government; but I shall confine myself entirely to those topics which will enable me to bring before the house the simple question, whether the present circumstances of the country, and the relative situation in which it stands with regard to its allies, are not materially altered since we last discussed the subject, and so much so as to call upon the house to review the reasons on which it then decided? and also to inquire, whether it is fit and proper to separate,

and enter upon a long recess, leaving the power of war and peace in the hands of His Majesty's present ministers, of ministers who have brought the country to its present situation, and whose hopes, promises, and predictions, with which they amused us, have failed in every instance—whether it becomes us to separate, without once more endeavoring to counsel His Majesty on this important, and to us all, interesting subject? When last this question was discussed, we were instructed by the prophetic speech and warning voice of that great man, whose absence the house, in common with myself, must regret upon this occasion, as to the utter impracticability of subduing the French Republic by force of arms. At that period, it was admitted, we were continuing the war for the purpose of restoring the house of Bourbon. Such was confessedly the object of ministers. In order to persuade the house to coincide with them, as to the expediency of pursuing the war in order to restore the French monarchy, and supporting His Majesty's ministers in refusing every kind of negociation with Buonaparte, six reasons were adduced. Now I will put it to the plain understanding of every man of common sense, whether we have not had the fullest experience, that every one of those six grounds or reasons for continuing the war and refusing to negociate have not wholly and completely failed? I ask, whether there is a single fragment of any one of them remaining? To prove that there is not, I will recapitulate them in their order: The first reason was, that we ought to wait for a better and more perfect acquaintance with the character of Buonaparte, and for some proof of the stability of the government of which he was the head. Have we not been enabled to form a sufficient estimate of his character, and need we require any further proofs of the stability of his power? I think the house and the country may be satisfied on these points. The second reason was, the great expen-

sive and persevering support that we should receive from our powerful and magnanimous ally, the Emperor of Russia; and even should his ardor in the cause relax, the assistance we were to expect from the Elector of Bavaria and the princes of the Empire. We have had all the experience that was necessary, and it has proved to demonstration, that the hopes formed of assistance from those powers have altogether failed. The third reason offered, was a treaty with the emperor of Germany, by which it was to be stipulated, that neither Austria nor England were to lay down their arms but with the mutual consent of each other. Has any one heard of such a treaty having taken place? I know nothing of its having been concluded, nor indeed does the fact of the existence of such a treaty at all appear. The fourth and principal reason was to be found in the repossession of Italy by the Emperor. The recent failure of his arms in that quarter has afforded us sufficient experience how premature were the hopes founded on that circumstance. The fifth reason was the increased spirit of the royalists in France. It was said, they were certain of finding allies in the discontents of the jacobins; that they were to persevere till the family of Bourbon was reseated on the throne of France; and that the divided state of that country furnished a ground of hope, that with the assistance of this, we should see the object for which the war was commenced and carried on completely accomplished. Has not experience shewn how rash and fallacious such hopes were? has not the event proved that they were formed without the least knowledge of human nature, about which ministers have talked so much? The sixth and last ground was the reduced and disorganized state of the French army. It was stated that such was the situation of the military power of France, that it was physically impossible for them to bring such a strength into the field as could produce success, or any thing like it. How just such

a conclusion was, the house, after the events of the present campaign, are enabled to determine. Thus, Sir, I have stated the six grounds that induced the house, when the subject was last before it, to support His Majesty's ministers in refusing what I must call the moderate, respectful, and apparently sincere overtures of Buonaparte.

Finding that every one of these grounds has failed, surely, Sir, I shall not be deemed a very unreasonable member of parliament, if I urge the house, before it consents to continue the war, to require at least six new reasons. The house will not, it cannot carry on this war upon those six grounds; which I have clearly proved, by shewing that they have uniformly failed, must have been made by ministers divested of all penetration, knowledge of the resources of the enemy, and capacity to conduct war with success, or make peace with honor. I can fancy but one reason that can possibly induce ministers to continue the war with France. It may be, Sir, that after all the reasons they have alleged as the basis of that support which they received from the house; after all their vain boasts of their own triumphs and success, and the defeat and despair of the enemy; after all those hopes of the divisions in France having prepared the way for the restoration of its antient government, hopes which they pledged themselves to realize; after their unfounded, weak, and ridiculous assertions of the reduced and ruined state of the French army; and, above all, after their violent and unqualified abuse of that great man, for so he must be called, who is at the head of the French Republic; I say, Sir, after ministers have so unnecessarily and unadvisedly committed themselves, it is natural to suppose they would feel themselves in an awkward situation, if obliged to treat with the man who has been the object of their virulent and ill-timed abuse. I am sensible they would be placed in an awkward situation in treating with him at present. But shall

their feelings be a ground for deferring the day of negotiation? Their wounded pride may make them wish to continue a war, though they are forced to abandon the grounds and principles on which they have hitherto carried it on. Were I a political friend of their's, I should say to them—"It is of much more consequence to stop the effusion of human blood, and heal the wounds of afflicted mankind, than to continue a war which desolates the earth, merely because your feelings would be hurt by entering upon a treaty for peace." But, Sir, ought the representatives of Great Britain to regard the pride or the feelings of His Majesty's ministers, when they cannot be gratified without dooming to misery and death thousands of our own fellow-subjects, and thousands of our enemies? Sir, as to the character of Buonaparte, which, in my opinion, forms so prominent an ingredient in the present argument, though I should certainly not have referred to it had it not been so much the subject of declamation on the other side of the house; with regard to his character and principles, I would put it to the candor of ministers themselves; if they possess any, as well as to the house, whether, since the period when they refused to negotiate with him, every action by which he has distinguished himself has not been eminently calculated to raise him in the good opinion of every man who judges without prejudice? That Buonaparte may justly be denominated an usurper, I admit; that he is a self-appointed dictator in France, I admit; but it must not be forgotten, that the situation of the country required the vigorous had of such a dictator as he is. That Buonaparte possesses more power than is compatible with the liberties of France, I admit; but that he possesses more power than is necessary to protect the Republic, and to enable it to resist those enemies that seek to destroy it, is what I will not admit. What has been the species of abuse with which his character has been attacked? Not merely

that he is an hypocrite, that he is a man devoid of principle, that he is not only divested of morality, but religion, professing whatever mode of faith best answers his purpose; his enemies have not been content with these topics of censure, but his military skill and reputation have been the subject of their attack. It has been said, that the sailors on board our vessels before Acre laughed at his want of skill in war. But, Sir, we have seen religion obtain a tolerant exemption in her favor under the government of this atheist; we have seen the faith of treaties observed under the government of this perfidious adventurer—the arts and sciences find protection under the government of this plunderer; the sufferings of humanity have been alleviated under this ferocious usurper; the arms of France have been led to victory by this Tyro in the art and practice of war!—Sir, I confess to you, I look back with astonishment to the period when that great general was so vilely libelled. I was wont to expect more candor, more elevation of sentiment, in an English gentleman. But the war in which we are engaged has deadened every heroic feeling which once gave the tone to the martial spirit of this abused country. Unfortunately for us, the French general has fully proved his title to heroic honors. Never since the days of Hannibal have such splendid events opened on the world with such decisive consequences. "*Cujus adolescentia ad scientiam rei militaris, non alienis præceptis, sed suis imperiis; non offensionibus belli, sed victoriis; non stipendiis, sed triumphis, est traducta.*" Such is the man who, even in his military character, we had been taught to consider with contempt! Such is the man who, even in his military character, we had been taught to consider with contempt! Such is the portrait of the man with whom His Majesty's ministers have refused to treat. Sir, I should not have mentioned this, if government had not made his character a main question as to the continuance of the war; and if His Majesty's ministers had

not shewn us our hopes of peace must depend upon their ideas concerning it. I do say, that, considering the manner in which he has been treated by those ministers, he has acted with singular moderation, humanity, and magnanimity; and therefore we have the evidence of facts as to his principles, and that evidence removes the main ground of objection to treating with him. There are moments in which it may be necessary to do justice to the merits of an enemy, but it never can be necessary to speak of an enemy with rancor. I have stated, Sir, that Buonaparte possesses much more power than is compatible with the liberty of France; but having always held the opinion that France ought to enjoy her liberty, and being persuaded that the death of that liberty would be effected by the combined powers forcing a government upon the people, I cannot but hope the time will arrive when France shall not only possess that portion of true liberty she ought to have, but that the government of this country will not consider its own security and the liberty of France inconsistent with each other. Sir, I may be censured for applying such a term as taste to a subject of such importance; but it does appear to me that the changes produced in the feelings of men, with respect to their admiration of exalted or distinguished characters, in a great measure are to be attributed to the taste and fashion that prevail. These are not times in which Kings have any reason to be proud of their wealth or superior power. The admiration of mankind is not confined to the characters of Kings alone; the world has had a lesson of the effects of their ambition. Buonaparte has shewn his country, that his object is to maintain the power he has attained by the moderation of his government; and I must hope, that when he has achieved the liberty of France, and his enemies have afforded him the opportunity of turning his attention to its internal regulations, he will, in giving it liberty, impart to it all the blessings and happiness of civi-

lized peace. It must be in the recollection of the house, how much stress was laid on the conduct of this man with regard to the success of any negotiations for terminating the war. Has he not sufficiently developed his character, and given proofs of the security and permanence with which our government might conclude a treaty with him? I believe, Sir, it will not be denied for a moment, that the general voice is for peace, immediate peace, if possible; the necessity of peace is felt throughout the country, both in this house and out of it. But I am sorry to say that there is a degree of careless indolence and supineness that pervades all ranks of the people, which to my mind is the worst symptom of the declining liberty of a country. There is scarcely a man whom you meet, who has known the extent of the calamities of the present war, yet in proportion to those calamities has been a supporter of government in carrying it on, who has not received the news of the victories over the Austrians, our allies, with a smile; they observe, that the victories of Buonaparte will lead to peace. Look to the universal sentiment those victories have produced in the city: the funds have risen in consequence of them; the people feel that it is to the defeat of our allies alone that they can look forward for an alleviation of their calamities. If the people have suffered by the continuation of the war, it is to themselves they must look as the cause of their sufferings. They feel the distresses of the war; they will not say, "We will have peace," but are content to receive it as a boon from the enemy, through the disgrace of our allies. I know the people have only to meet in a constitutional way, and express their determination to have peace, in order to obtain it: but no; they wait till they receive it by the defeat and loss of honor of those with whom we are allied in the prosecution of the war. It is this supineness that I consider as a symptom of the decay of the spirit which once characterised the country.

There never was a period when there appeared so little public virtue, so little independence of mind, as at present; it is to rescue it from such apathy that I make this motion. Referring to what I professed at the outset of my observations, I shall not further occupy the attention of the house; but conclude with the motion I proposed to make; observing, at the same time, that no one can be more sensible of the unpopularity of such a motion than I am; however, I do not know that there can be any objection to it. I put it to ministers, whether they ought not to give every member of this house an opportunity of attending the discussion of so important a question as that of peace or war, previous to the separation of parliament? I shall now move, Sir, "That this house may be called over this day fortnight."

Mr. Pitt having replied,

Mr. Sheridan rose again. I have little inclination, Sir, to trouble the house with any further remarks. I trust every honorable gentleman must be convinced of the propriety of my motion, from what has been already said; but there were some expressions which fell from the right honorable gentleman who had just sat down, which I think it my duty to observe upon. He says that I was intemperate in my language. It might be so; but certainly he has by no means set me an example of moderation. I can safely say that I never saw even him to lose his temper so much. His faculties seem to have been overwhelmed by his passions, for he communicated nearly as few ideas as if he had risen and beat a drum or sounded a trumpet. We had words in abundance and fine-sounding words; but argument we had none. He says, that I enumerated the six reasons for carrying on the war without the necessary qualifications, and that I omitted the principal reason of all, viz. the deranged state of the French finances. Sir, I can safely declare that I

am ignorant of the qualifications to which the right honorable gentleman alludes, and that I left out this mighty reason from my list because it was not mentioned by him and his friends when they maintained the propriety of persevering in the contest. They had frequently foretold the bankruptcy of France, and maintained that she was ready to sink into the gulf, and as often found their predictions erroneous and their assertions false. Afraid of again subjecting themselves to the charge of ignorance and temerity, or rather finding that the nation could no longer be duped by their stale tricks, they abstained altogether from urging this argument against listening to the overtures of Buonaparte. The right honorable gentleman pleads in excuse for his conduct, that he never promised us success. He says, "We are good ministers, we have taken the most likely steps to promote the welfare of the country; but we have been disappointed, and things have turned out differently from what there was reason to expect." When I have shewn that every ground on which he has built has failed, and all his reasonings and predictions were erroneous, what kind of language is it for a minister to talk of his promises? When he whom he lately boasted of as being a magnanimous and affectionate ally, has abandoned our cause, and is on the brink of hostilities with us; when those troops which he said would do more than supply the place of the Russians, are almost all cut to pieces, and the dominions of their prince in the power of the enemy; when the French armies, which he represented as completely disorganized and incapable of being recruited, are triumphing in every direction, and presenting a most formidable aspect to the whole of Europe; when the Austrians whose triumphs were so highly extolled; who were affirmed to be in a state to continue their victorious career, and who were said to be unanimous with ourselves, have lost the whole of Italy, tremble for their capital, refuse to enter into a treaty with us,

and are probably at this moment treating with the French; when the royalists are all subdued and reconciled to the republican government, who, the right honorable gentleman assured us, were sufficient to restore royalty in France; when that character which was abused and vilified, and loaded with every epithet of reproach, has shone forth with unexampled splendour, and given proofs of almost every excellence; the right honorable gentleman comes down with a puny, sorry, childish, pitiful excuse, and says he made no promises. What! is he not to be blamed for having been deficient of intelligence; for having despised advice; for having acted without deliberation and foresight; for having persisted in a system unjustifiable, impolitic, and ruinous, because he did not promise us success? He stands convicted of complete inability or gross misrepresentation. If he really believed what he said, he is destitute of that penetration, sagacity, and soundness of judgment which are indispensably necessary to a minister. If he was conscious of the real state of affairs, and foresaw the events which were likely to happen, and yet talked with confidence of victory, and obstinately persisted in the contest, no epithet of reproach and condemnation is too strong to be applied to him. Sir, I thought it my duty to move that the members of the house should be called together before the recess, that their opinions may be taken upon the present alarming posture of affairs. My motion has no other object; and no imputation can be more false than imputing to me a desire of dispiriting the country, or encouraging our enemies. I do not despond; and I would rather shed the last drop of my blood, than see my country dishonored, or lose its independence. It would be unpardonable in any minister to dare to prorogue parliament at a conjuncture like the present, when every day may produce events interesting to the existence of the State. I hope that he will not think of proroguing parliament:

I am astonished that he even objects to a call of the house—I have but a very few more words to address to you.—I have proved that the six motives for carrying on the war with France have failed every one of them; and though the *onus probandi* lay upon the minister, he has not deigned to assign any new ones. Does it not then follow, that the war should be discontinued, or at least that a full attendance should be procured, that the propriety of discontinuing it may be canvassed? How great is the responsibility that ministers thus incur! If this system is continued, ruin must ensue. If I were to say that the French, having now a large body of troops at their disposal, might fit out an armament at Brest against our colonies, and send it to the West Indies, the right honorable gentleman would insure me that such a plan is impracticable, and that our possessions in every quarter of the globe are in a state of security. But after the fate of his predictions, would I, or would any one, give credit to them? Although he should, from his knowledge of human nature, declare it to be impossible, may we not, reflecting on the past, suppose that the Emperor of Russia may be influenced by the French, and declare war against his former allies? If he were to affirm that our commerce would continue to flourish, and our finances to be prosperous, would it be no answer to say, you have formerly been deceived? It is strange, indeed, to observe the manner in which these gentlemen apply experience to themselves and to others: they say that you should put trust in no one till you are thoroughly acquainted with him, and that, if he has once acted improperly, he should never be trusted more. But they still claim confidence in themselves from all the world, although they have been repeatedly convicted of ignorance, incapacity, and presumption. I thought it my duty, Sir, to bring forward this motion, and now I leave it to its fate."

Ayes 27; *noes* 124.

DECEMBER 1.

NEGOTIATION WITH FRANCE.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose, and the clerk (at his request) having read that part of His Majesty's speech which refers to the late negotiations, spoke as follows: "Every one, Sir, who heard this speech delivered from the throne, and every one who has read the papers which were laid before the house, must expect that we should take the subject into our solemn consideration, and state our opinion upon it to His Majesty in an humble address. This, Sir, is a step which reason dictates, and it is strictly conformable to parliamentary usage. Whenever any communication of this nature has been made to the house, the invariable practice has been, to canvas the conduct of ministers in the affair to which it refers, and to state the result of that enquiry to our Sovereign. Ministers, however, seem to be of a different opinion; and, for some reason or other, seem averse to all investigation of their conduct: I, therefore, thinking it of the utmost importance to the public that it should be fully investigated, shall proceed to state the result of my most serious and mature consideration. That result, I trust, will meet the sentiments of the house, and the motion, which is founded on it, be agreed to. Instead of entering into the subject at large, as I once intended; instead of pointing out with minuteness where ministers have been guilty of insincerity, where of prevarication, where of weakness, where of hypocrisy—I shall content myself with endeavoring to prove, from the past conduct of our allies and their present views, that we ought to disentangle ourselves from all continental connections as soon as possible; and, by entering into a separate negotiation, conclude a separate peace: in doing this, I shall lay down two propositions, and establish upon these, two separate conclusions—The first is, that, from the commence-

ment of the confederacy, there has existed in the different states who composed it, a mercenary spirit, a sole view to private aggrandisement, the grossest and the most shameful insincerity. By these its object has been defeated; these now exist in their full force; and there is no prospect of its object being attained. It will hence follow, that it is our interest and our duty to withdraw from it, to avoid the obstacles which it throws in the way of peace, and no longer pledge ourselves to continue to make war till those states which are called our allies shall be completely exhausted. The next proposition I shall lay down and support is this, that there appears the strongest ground to suspect, that in all the negotiations for peace which ministers have carried on, although they may not have thwarted their plenipotentiaries, although there may have been conditions to which they would have acceded, still that they have never sincerely wished for peace, and never sincerely lamented the want of it. The inference arising from this is plain; since the same ministers remain in office, the interference of parliament is necessary; that alone can alter their intentions, counteract the mischiefs which their views are calculated to produce, or afford the least chance of salvation to the country.

"I take upon me then to say, Sir, that there is no one power with whom we have been in alliance, which has not deceived, defrauded, and deserted us. It is melancholy, that while I am speaking, additional arguments, and new proofs, should spring up to strengthen my position. Not only has an embargo been laid upon all British vessels by our late magnanimous ally, but it would seem that their captains have all been thrown into prison. I hope things will not turn out so ill as there is at present reason to apprehend; but, allowing that there have been great exaggerations, there cannot be a doubt that the boasted friendship of Russia is at an end, and that by our vaunted ally we are forsaken, be-

trayed, insulted, and outraged. For having said that the Emperor Paul was insincere, and not to be relied upon, a person was not long since fined and imprisoned; yet this same Emperor Paul has done a most unjustifiable act, which shews that he was undeserving of confidence. This embargo is not all; there is every reason to fear that almost every port in the Elbe is shut against us; that the King of Prussia and the Duke of Brunswick have interfered, and that, except by way of Mecklenberg, we can neither draw supplies of grain from the continent, nor send thither our manufactures. If these things are true, it is surely time for the house to consider whether this bar to negotiation should be allowed to continue, whether ministers should be allowed to keep possession of this pretext for carrying on the war. The right honorable gentleman lately allowed that our allies had treated us ill: he talked of the dereliction of some, and the perfidy of others; to some he ascribed unaccountable fickleness, and to others shameless atrocity. But (said he) who could have thought it? We were not endowed with a faculty of certainly foreseeing future events, and without that, no one could have suspected what has happened. Sir, this is not the language of an enlightened statesman, or of an upright man. Did it require more than human prudence to foresee that Prussia, after the first ebullition of her resentment against the French revolution, would soon perceive that it was not her interest to waste her blood and her treasure for the aggrandizement of Austria; and that the best way to extinguish jacobinism, and to check the spirit of innovation, was to attend to internal regulations, to promote industry, to secure plenty, and to alleviate the public burthens? Did it require any great sagacity to foresee that Spain, unable to withstand the shock of republican arms, would, to save herself from ruin, consent to any terms of accommodation? Could it not be suspected that the Emperor would

prefer his own interest to that of Great Britain, and that he would not pay a very scrupulous regard to any engagements which ought to have prevented him from giving this preference? Has it only been discovered of late years, that the petty states of Germany must all act in concert, either with the Emperor, or the King of Prussia? Was it a thing very improbable that, when magnanimous Paul saw all his allies fighting to promote their own interest, and when he discovered that he himself could gain nothing in the contest, his magnanimity should abate, his ardor for martial glory should cool, and that he should abandon the cause of morality, religion, and social order? But, Sir, they should surely have been better able to appreciate the operation of this mercenary spirit, since it first animated their own bosoms, and they infused it into the confederacy. On what principles and pretences did they enter into the war? We are severely censured for ascribing various motives to them, and different one's to-day from what we mentioned a few days before. But the fault is their's; they change their language with every change of circumstances, and make their inducements for performing past actions to depend upon what happens years after they were performed. I cannot forget that it was once said, we had gone to war because France would not allow us to remain at peace. This assertion is again repeated in Lord Grenville's letter; and it is there positively asserted, that our only reason for going to war was the unprovoked aggression of France. No sooner was this language held at home, than another ground of warfare was stated to the rest of Europe. The enormities of the French were painted in glowing colours; the dangerous nature of their designs was laid open; the overthrow of all regular governments was represented as inevitable if they should succeed; their private proceedings were represented as a sufficient reason for attempting to subdue them; neutrality was denounced as impolicy, as pusillanimity,

as treason, against the human race. We declared to Tuscany, we declared to Sardinia, we declared to Switzerland, that they need not wait for aggression, that all had already received sufficient provocation, who had any regard for domestic happiness, for social comforts, or the consolations of religion. Was there not here the grossest hypocrisy, and the most shameful double-dealing? Must not our allies have been disgusted or corrupted by our bad example? After all these protestations of respect for the rights of humanity—after all these sentiments of abhorrence for the regicide republic, ministers were the first who neglected the professed object of the war, and who consulted individual gain. While they were calling upon all to join in a contest such as never appeared before—while they were maintaining that, to bring the awful and unprecedented struggle to a happy termination, they thought they must have an indemnity for their trouble—they fitted out an expedition, and stole the West India islands. This was the way in which we were to destroy usurpation, and to set an awful example of the punishment which awaits disloyalty and irreligion. In two right honorable gentlemen opposite to me I think I see the true reasons for carrying on the war personified, and their union is equally compatible. The one (Mr. Pitt) says, I will admit that the principle of the war is to suppress jacobinism, and destroy its leaders, if I am not required to act upon it. I will admit that our only object is to establish the throne and the altar, provided I am allowed to carry on my plans of aggrandizement. This is the reason why our exertions have been so ill directed, and why the means employed have been so inadequate to the end proposed.

"From that moment all dignity forsook us; and the variance between our professions and our practice was by turns the subject of laughter, of censure, and of reprobation to our allies. We were entitled to salvage for the civilized world; a right honorable

gentleman (Mr. Dundas) I heard once say; but it would have been time enough to be paid when the work was accomplished; *when the job was done.* He first insists upon salvage, and then sets out in pursuit of the vessel. Our example, Sir, had the most deplorable effects. It infused a spirit of insincerity, and a desire of aggrandizement among all the confederates, and they have ever since assisted each other as long only, and to as great an extent, as they thought would be productive of their own individual advantage. Prussia soon after deserted us, in a manner which I need not recal. The Emperor's whole attention was turned to the acquisition of a barrier, in place of the one which Joseph had destroyed; and his only object was to get possession of Valenciennes, Quesnoy, and the other fortresses of French Flanders. The fall of Dunkirk was anxiously expected, that it might be delivered up to Great Britain. This has been attempted to be denied; but it can be denied with no shadow of reason. Thus, though we did not absolutely break faith with our allies, we introduced the principle which led others to do so; and we have no reason whatever to reproach their misconduct.

"To apply what I have said to Russia. I never was a friend to magnanimous Paul, and am so now less than ever.—'But I must render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.' His mother, the Empress Catherine, was very liberal of proclamations and promises; but her magnanimous son declared it to be his unalterable resolution not to sheath the sword till he had restored the House of Bourbon. He, in fact, sent numerous armies into the field, and was prepared to make still greater exertions; but he soon discovered that his allies were not equally magnanimous with himself; that private interest was their only guide; and that, whilst his forces were cut in pieces, and his resources expended, he merely saw those made more powerful who might one day become his enemies. He took

upon himself the title of Grand Master of Malta, to be sure (a most ridiculous step in every point of view, particularly as he is a member of the Greek church), but not an inch of the island does he possess. Over this subject there hangs a considerable degree of mystery, which I should like to see developed. There are several circumstances which look as if, though no absolute promise was made to Paul, of the island, some hopes had been held out to him, or at least he was allowed, without being undeceived, to cherish sanguine hopes of being presented with it. It is not long since a fleet, with troops on board, sailed from this country, for the express purpose of taking possession of the place when it should surrender, and to ensure its good government. No remonstrances were made when he assumed the title; and, when he pretended to make Captain Home Popham a knight of that order, his power to do so was recognised in the London Gazette. There are, I think, strong reasons to suspect that his magnanimous mind was led to believe he would receive this as a reward for his exertions in this magnanimous scramble.

"It is strange, Sir, that not a man on the continent could be found who would take a part in a cause of such a nature without being subsidized. We have been obliged to bribe them to do their duty, to protect their property, and to defend their religion. We have been obliged to be the recruiting-serjeants and paymasters-general to Europe.—The right honorable gentleman won't be pleased, perhaps, if I find fault with the Emperor of Germany. He will allow me to abuse the Spaniards, to complain of the versatility of Paul, and to apply the epithets of perfidious and dishonorable to the King of Prussia. [*Mr. Pitt seemed to dissent.*] Perhaps, the right honorable gentleman has thoughts of forming an alliance with that sovereign, by means of a handsome subsidy, to make up for his northern neighbour. I am at a loss to conceive on what

other account he can dislike to hear his name mentioned with disrespect. But, to proceed to his Imperial and Royal Majesty. It may appear odd in me to use such liberties with crowned heads; but it should be recollected, that when we speak of Kings and Emperors, we mean only to speak of their ministers. Sovereigns are all immaculate and infallible, and their bad counsels are alone to be attributed to those who surround them. Still it is an ungracious task to expose the conduct of the cabinet of Vienna; but at the call of duty I do not hesitate to perform it. I set out then by declaring, in the most positive and unequivocal manner, that the Emperor of Germany has failed in his engagements with us more than any ally that it has been our misfortune to be burthened with, and that he is not now performing the contract which he lately subscribed. Ought I not then to say what I feel, and to endeavor to impress it upon the house? On one occasion he completely broke his faith: he entered into the preliminaries of Leoben, and signed the peace of Campo Formio, when he had promised not to treat but in conjunction with us. I need not be told that he was compelled to do so; all that I say is, that he once broke his engagements, and that what once happened may happen again. (Mr. Pitt *was here observed to whisper several of those sitting around him.)* It would be really much better, Sir, if the right honorable gentleman would answer me himself, than now interrupt me by telling others how I may be answered. But I do not urge so strongly against him his conduct on that occasion, as the manner in which he behaved when, after the breaking off of the negociations at Rastadt, he again took the field. The right honorable gentleman having then concluded a treaty with Russia, although the Emperor of Germany refused to come under any engagements, boasted of the triple alliance, and maintained that France could not possibly withstand its efforts. He continued to hold this language after he must

have known that Paul I. was disgusted, and about to withdraw his forces. When that event at last took place, as every one had long foreseen, he applied in the most urgent manner to the Emperor of Germany; and, if he would enter into a new treaty with him, offered him his own terms. The Emperor was then undisputed Master of Italy, and victory crowned his arms; he turned a deaf ear to all these solicitations. Would he have hesitated a moment had he been zealous in the common cause, or had taken the smallest interest in it? He wished to carry on unmolested his own nefarious schemes, by overturning independent states to enlarge his dominions; and to be able to make peace as soon as he had acquired enough to satisfy his ambition; he, therefore, kept aloof from the treasure which was temptingly held out to his view. On the 13th of February a message was brought down from His Majesty, in which our Russian alliance, the advantages of which had been stated to be inconceivable, was talked of in the highest manner. It was said, that Bavaria and other German states, were about to bring immense armies into the field, and that a treaty was forming with the Emperor of Germany. Now, Sir, His Majesty does not state that he will propose an alliance with the Emperor, but that he is actually treating with him. The Emperor was still prosperous, and our two millions were despised. At length, on the 20th of June, when the battle of Marengo, which made such a melancholy reverse in his history, had been fought on the 14th; when he found that Melas had been obliged to yield up the greatest part of Italy, and that Moreau, having gained three great pitched battles, was advancing rapidly to Vienna, being in the extremity of distress, and utterly unable, however well inclined, to promote the common cause, he pledges himself to assist us to the utmost, and unless in conjunction with us, not to treat with the enemy. There is something extremely injurious in the alliance itself, which

ought to be pointed out and exposed. On the 20th of June, it is agreed that his Majesty the Emperor and King shall have 2,000,000 of money, to be paid at three instalments, in July, September, and December. For this, what was to be done? He was to carry on the campaign with all possible vigor, and not to treat except in conjunction with His Britannic Majesty. But it has likewise a retrospective operation, and was to take effect from the beginning of March last. He thus pledges his imperial word that he *will* exert every effort to annoy the enemy for four months which are gone, and that for the same period of past time, he *will* not make a separate peace with the French Republic. He received the first instalment for carrying on in Italy his schemes of foul ambition and unprincipled aggrandisement; the next, for making an armistice. This was using all his means, this was struggling, as he promised, to the last gasp!—But he wishes to make amends; when the armistice is near expiring, he leaves his capital, he springs from the couch of ease, he repairs to the field, he is confident that he will be able to re-establish his affairs. Who would not second such an heroic prince? Every subject in his dominions must flock to his standard. But no sooner had he arrived at the army with these magnanimous views, than his courage failed him, and he was seized with a most magnanimous panic. There are some things which one would think might as well be done by proxy, and some prerogatives of sovereignty which it must be pleasant for the sovereign to exercise by delegation. But it would seem, on the other hand, that there are degrees in all things in power, in aggrandisement, in humility, in meanness; and that he who has one in a super-eminent degree, is apt to give proof of all the rest. Francis, therefore, would not allow another to act now in his place; but, by signing, with his own hand, the convention

of Hohenlenden, gave proof of the most super-imperial pusillanimity.

" The next question is, whether he has since been faithful to his engagements. The right honorable gentleman says, he never has had the slightest idea of entering into a separate negociation with France, though to be sure it has been impossible for him openly to carry on the war. I must use the liberty to say, that that is impossible. I make no doubt that ministers have been told so; but they have not been told the truth. I cannot but regret that the fourteen documents which I moved for on a former night were not laid before the house; and I must say, that ministers assigned no sufficient reason for refusing to produce them. It was said, that Count St. Julien had no credentials. I perceive it is asserted in one of M. Otto's notes, that he carried with him a letter from the Emperor to the Chief Consul, and this assertion has never been contradicted. I may be told, that this could convey no power to an ambassador; as a sovereign, not responsible himself, must act by those who are. This is, no doubt, a maxim of our constitution; but in despotic forms of government it is different; and absolute kings not unfrequently conclude treaties, and do other diplomatic acts, without the intervention of any one. The preliminaries, no doubt, required to be ratified; but neither was our treaty with the Emperor conclusive till it had been ratified; yet no one would, on that account, maintain, that Lord Minto was completely unauthorised to sign it. Lord Grenville says, he never heard of these pretended negociations till they were mentioned by M. Otto. Why not, then, produce the Emperor's disavowal of St. Julien's proceedings, and clear up the mystery at once? 'Take my word for it,' says the minister, 'to produce the paper is unnecessary.' When documents which might be made public are kept back, I must suspect the account which is given of their contents. The note of the Count de

Thugut to M. Talleyrand evidently does not contain a new proposal, but is an answer to a proposal already made. The letter states that plenipotentiaries had been appointed, and rejoices that Great Britain was to take a part in the negociations. If there is sense in words, and if the writer of this note understood the use of language, proposals for a separate treaty had before been made and accepted. It is as clear as day, that negociations had been actually begun. Lord Minto thanks the Austrian ministers for their obliging communications. Is this the language of one who thinks that separate overtures cannot possibly be entertained? From the two circumstances, of the mission of St. Julien, and the expressions in Thugut's and Lord Minto's letters, I have not a doubt that the Emperor has deceived our ministers; that he has been treating with Buonaparte for a separate peace; and that he has once more been guilty of a gross breach of faith towards his ally.

"I shall now endeavor to prove, that ministers never, at any period since the beginning of the war, have sincerely wished for peace: and that as often as they have made an attempt to promote peace, they have rejoiced at its failure. Need I mention more than their conduct to the Emperor? When they urged him to make a common cause with England after it was impossible for him to be of the least service to us, can it be doubted that their object was, that they might have a ready excuse for refusing to negotiate? After the negociation at Paris, his Majesty declared in the most solemn manner, that he would omit no opportunity of putting an end to the destructive contest, and that he would willingly grant the conditions which he had before offered. After the breaking off of the negociation at Lisle, known by the name of the *sincere treaty*, the same language was put into his Majesty's mouth; and on the 28th of October, it was declared, that the offers which had been rejected,

would at any future period cheerfully be made. The right honorable gentleman, I know, is always sore about this *sincere treaty*, and does not like to hear it mentioned. But he really need not be so uneasy; I impute nothing to him of sincerity or bad faith, There is great difference between saying that you will grant the enemy certain conditions of peace, and anxiously wishing them to be acceded to; and there is no inconsistence between offering them sincerely, and rejoicing heartily that they are rejected. A person in the country who has quarrelled with one of his neighbourhood about the inclosing of a common or the making of a highway, rather than go to law, and thus incur the odium of all his neighbours, will perhaps desire his attorney to settle the dispute upon certain conditions. These conditions he would no doubt soon afterwards fulfil; but nevertheless he may wish them to be rejected, and exult if they are, for then he will have public opinion on his side, and will have better chance to have the common divided, or the road turned as he wished it. Ministers, Sir, did not try to conceal their exultation. They publicly thanked Providence for the dangers they had escaped. It was rather a strange feeling to return thanks to Heaven that all hopes of returning tranquillity had vanished, and that thousands were about to be slaughtered. Sir, the result may be reckoned a punishment for such a presumption, and ought to be an awful warning against such a display of insensibility, and such a mockery of religion.

" His Majesty had been made to say, that whatever the government was which prevailed in France, he would be ready to treat with it. How was this promise kept? An offer came from Buonaparte of the most moderate kind. They had treated with jacobins and regicides; yet it was contemptuously rejected. They did not say they would not engage in any but a joint negociation; they urged none of their old pretences, but they took new ground and boldly de-

manded experience and the evidence of facts of the good dispositions of the government, and insisted upon the restoration of the Bourbons. Here the true cause of the war broke out, and fiction was for a time laid aside. It was allowed that Buonaparte was sincere. He was descried in every figure of speech, and every epithet of abuse was applied to him. He was called cruel, profligate, unprincipled, atheistical, an adventurer, an usurper, a renegado, the child and champion of jacobinism; but when it was asked whether he was inclined to peace, it was answered, 'Yes; most sincerely. Peace is necessary to him; but should we allow him to obtain it, and thus to establish his power? Should we prolong the reign of this unprincipled adventurer, of this cruel usurper, of this atheistical renegado; should we confer a favor upon jacobinism, by conferring a favor upon its child and its champion?'

"I now come to shew, that the events of the last negociation support my position with equal strength. They could no longer assign, as a pretence for their warlike disposition, the instability of the power of Buonaparte; they could not venture to revile his character; they durst not say he was void of moderation, and an enemy to tranquillity and social order. 'If he again proposes peace to us, thought they, we are undone. We are at present without a shield from censure; our real dispositions must be made public; we are without all means to mislead the people. Could we only form an alliance with a foreign court, then the faith of treaties would come in to our assistance.' The emperor was reduced to difficulties, and in the hour of distress they directed their ambassador to offer him two millions of money if he would allow us to promise that we would not enter into any treaty for peace without him, and he would, for form sake, make a corresponding promise to us in return. This money was squandered, not to promote a British object. It was morally impossible that he could lend us the least assistance; yet he would clog any future ne-

gociation, by rendering it necessary for him to be a party to it. Are there two ends which could be served by this step? Does it not warrant me to conclude, that they would reckon a successful treaty a most lamentable event? I impute no bad motive to them; but merely assert, that they have a firm conviction that peace with the French Republic is most undesirable, and that every nerve should be strained to widen the breach between the two countries, to enflame the national prejudices of each of them, and, while a guinea remains in the country, to persevere in the desperate struggle.

"I shall be told, perhaps, that there is a part of the negociations to which I have not alluded, and which proves that ministers were willing to make any sacrifice to put an end to the horrors of war.—Sir, I give ministers no credit for this part of their conduct. I condemn them for even once entertaining an overture for a maritime truce;—a maritime truce every Englishman must have abhorred. There was nothing too exorbitant for the French to ask as a compensation for suspending hostilities on the continent; but no consideration for our ally, no hope of advantage to be derived from joint negociation, should have induced the English government to think for a moment of interrupting the course of our naval triumphs.—This measure, Sir, would have broken the heart of the navy, and would have damped all its future exertions. How would our gallant sailors have felt, when, chained to their decks like galley slaves, they saw the enemy's vessels sailing under their bows in security, and proceeding, without a possibility of being molested, to revictual those places which had been so long blockaded by their astonishing skill, perseverance, and valor? We never stood more in need of their services, and their feelings at no time deserved to be more studiously consulted. The north of Europe presents to England a most awful and threatening aspect. Without giving an opinion as to the origin

of these hostile dispositions, or pronouncing decidedly whether they are wholly ill-founded, I hesitate not to say, that if they have been excited because we have insisted upon enforcing the old and established maritime law of Europe, because we stood boldly forth in defence of indisputable privileges, because we have refused to abandon the source of our prosperity, the pledge of our security, and the foundation of our naval greatness, they ought to be disregarded or set at defiance. If we are threatened to be deprived of that which is the charter of our existence, which has procured us the commerce of the world, and been the means of spreading our glory over every land; if the rights and honors of our flag are to be called in question, every risk should be run, and every danger braved. Then we should have a legitimate cause of war—then the heart of every Briton would burn with indignation, and his hand be stretched forth in defence of his country. If our flag is to be insulted, let us nail it to the top-mast of the nation; there let it fly while we shed the last drop of our blood in protecting it, and let it be degraded only when the nation itself is overwhelmed.

"I come now, Sir, to that part of the correspondence which relates to Egypt. This is the strongest charge against His Majesty's ministers: it is of the more importance, because it is not to be endured that imputations should be thrown in this house upon officers employed in the service of their country abroad. One of the greatest recompences that can be bestowed upon an officer is the thanks of this house. Letus take care, then, lest, by suffering insinuations to be thrown out against them, we at last tend to lessen the value of those thanks. I say, that that gallant officer Sir Sidney Smith had power to treat. Ministers say, no. I demand then the production of the instrucions to him. No, reply HisMajesty's ministers, take our words. I contend, that Sir Sidney Smith was sent out, that he had a

distinct station, and that he could not have received any instructions from Lord Keith in less than two months. I say also, that he had powers to negociate the evacuation of Egypt almost upon any terms. A proclamation was published at Constantinople, and carried into Egypt; it was at the close of January, 1799. In the gallant and noble defence of Acre, Sir Sidney Smith distributed this proclamation to the people; and what did it contain? Sir Sidney, authorised by government, promises safe-conduct and passports to all the French who will leave the army and embark for France. At this time then His Majesty's ministers must have been apprised that Sir Sidney thought himself authorised to act. Did you send out word that he was not so authorised? But then comes a parcel of correspondence seized about that time; how garbled I know not. You find a desponding account of the French army, but nothing of the Grand Vizier's. Notice is sent to General Kleber that the convention is not to be respected. The General immediately renews hostilities, and with a slaughter so immense as scarcely to be credited. The effect of this measure, I fear, is, that you have lost Egypt for ever. Surely ministers ought to have known, that nothing but the convention of El Arish saved Egypt. Surely they ought to have known, that of two hundred thousand of whom the grand Vizier's army consisted, one hundred thousand had deserted; that the levies, raised as usual only for six months, were raw, and could not be disciplined; that the Grand Vizier was left with a miserable remnant; that Ghezzar Pacha had risen in his rear; and that his destruction must have been inevitable, but for the masterly manner in which Sir Sidney Smith managed his handful of sailors, and but for the consummate policy and abilities with which he acted with respect to the convention of El Arish. The Chief Consul says, the good genius of France has saved Egypt to the French. Sir, the good genius of

France has frequently been made up of the improvidence and want of skill of His Majesty's ministers. They ought to have known that the Grand Vizier's army was in this wretched state, and that Passwan Oglou harassed and distracted the attention of the Porte with a powerful and triumphant force. But whether they knew these things or not, I ask, on what principles did they act towards Turkey their ally? They say to the French you shall not escape unless you consent to lay down your arms. They say so to an enemy in an ally's country, that ally having already entered into a negociation, by which the enemy are to evacuate the country. Now, Sir, we who talk of the conduct of the French, what do we say to this? Suppose a party of French had landed in Ireland, and that we had some Russian officers in our service in that kingdom; we agree with the French that they shall evacuate it. No, say the Russians, they shall stay where they are; they shall not go till they have laid down their arms. Would not the right honorable gentleman reprobate such conduct in his loftiest strain? Sir, I will not press this subject farther; but I do hope and trust that it will again be taken up separately and seriously.

"I recur now to the correspondence; and I do it in order to shew how hastily some gentlemen give credit to His Majesty's ministers, when they tell us, that Count St. Julien had no authority to treat, and that Sir Sidney Smith had none. Let gentlemen advert to this circumstance—let me ask them whether any trust is to be given to that letter in the correspondence which speaks of the letter of General Kleber, and which characterises it as containing an engagement to execute the convention of El Arish as soon as the King's acquiescence in it should be made known to him? Let gentlemen refer to the letter itself.

"Sir, I cannot but think I see, through the whole

of the correspondence, the preparation for a rupture, I see Captain George appointed, because the attention of the public shall not be drawn to the communications with M. Otto. This stiff-necked policy shews insincerity. I see Mr. Nepean and Mr. Hammond also appointed to confer with M. Otto, because they are of the same rank. Is not this as absurd as if Lord Whitworth were to be sent to Petersburgh, and told, that he was not to treat but with some gentleman of six feet high, and as handsome as himself? Sir, I repeat that this is a stiff-necked policy, when the lives of thousands are at stake. Ministers seem to have an excellent knack at putting papers together; they have given us, before, pictures of pikes and profiles of spears; and until we sift and compare things, many of us might be led to suppose that they were seriously desirous of peace. Lord Grenville says, 'If the situation of the French army in that country were to become matter of discussion between the two governments, His Majesty and his allies have a right, on every principle of good faith, as practised between civilised nations, to require that the French should evacuate Egypt on the terms stipulated in the convention of Arish, those stipulations having been ratified both by the Turkish government and by the French commanding officer, and His Majesty having also instructed his admiral commanding in those seas to accede to them as soon as they were known here. This demand would be made with the more reason, because even subsequent to the recommencement of hostilities in Egypt (under circumstances to which His Majesty forbears to advert), an official engagement was entered into by General Kleber in his letter to the Kaimakan, dated the 10th April, 1800, by which that general, then commanding in chief the French army in Egypt, and consequently possessing full powers to bind his government in this respect, formally undertook that the convention of El Arish should be executed so soon as the King's acquies-

cence in it should be notified to him.' What does General Kleber say? 'The Sublime Porte will still find me disposed to deliver up to him the possession of Egypt upon the conditions stipulated at El Arish, with the exception of some modifications which the existing circumstances have rendered necessary. Thus all motive for a fresh effusion of blood would be obviated, and a regular negociation (the effect of which would no longer be prevented by unforeseen orders) would restore to the Ottoman Empire those provinces of which it would be in vain to attempt to deprive us by force of arms. If your excellency shares these sentiments of peace and concord, you will communicate them to his Majesty the Emperor Selim the Second; and, without doubt, you will obtain orders to resume, without delay, those conferences which would conduct us to the object which we are equally desirous of attaining.'

"It thus appears that General Kleber calls for a new negotiation, and desires to have fresh conferences. There is not a word in the letter which states he will evacuate Egypt as soon as the King's acquiescence is known. A right honorable gentleman attempted the other day to attach some importance to the letter of an aid-de-camp, who was at Jaffa. Where is the letter? (D. in the Appendix to the Correspondence). I always suspect something from these gentlemen with respect to papers. Does Lord Grenville say any thing of this letter? No; he only refers to General Klebers. Sir, I dwell the more upon this, in order to shew that we are not to take it for granted that the character of the documents referred to in the correspondence is a true one. I have proved that the character given of General Kleber's letter is in no part correct; and I contend I have a right to assume, that the description of other papers is as little correct. Sir, I honestly confess that I do not believe any thing would have induced the Secretary at War to have put his name to such a quibble.

"The object of the motion which it is my intention to submit, is, to afford one step more towards negotiation, and remove those impediments which our connection with the Emperor of Germany has thrown in the way of it. With respect to the war itself, I do think it to have been a most unsuccessful, and (to ministers) a most disgraceful one. God forbid that any man should, as some persons hinted the other night, attack the exploits of our navy! they have been most glorious and splendid; but when you talk of a successful war, you must mean one that has accomplished the objects for which it was undertaken. Have you deterred other countries from aggrandisement and rapine? Have you restored the Bourbons? No; but you have taken Trincomale. Have you re-established the noblesse of France? No; but you have taken Ceylon. Have you restored the orders of France? No; but you have taken the Cape. But will you tell me, that if you place these in one scale, and the two hundred and seventy millions of debt in the other, the latter will not overbalance your successes? But this is not the fair way. You must calculate what you will keep; you must calculate the seventeen millions imposed by the war; you must calculate their effect upon the industry and impatience of the country. Will any man tell me, that we should have consented to have made the purchase at such a price, even without the loss of a single life? No, Sir; no. This, then, I contend is an unsuccessful war. But it is said we have annihilated the navy of the enemy. Let us recollect, however, the time when it was said that nothing could compensate for leaving Holland in the power of France, for suffering her to possess the Netherlands, and for permitting her to have such a long line of coast, from the Texel almost to the Adriatic? You may, it is true, leave the enemy crippled, but you leave them with the power of raising themselves to as great a naval height as they ever were in possession of before.

"But it is said, we have preserved our constitution. How have we preserved it? So careful have ministers been of its preservation, that they are afraid to give us the *use* of it. They have considered it as some choice thing, which ought to be put out of sight, and carefully locked up. I hope, Sir, the constitution is only suspended, and that we shall yet see it in all its splendor: but till that time comes I can give no one any credit for his attentions to it. Sir, *peace must be concluded*, or it must be proved that the period of fraud, prevarication, and insincerity is over, and that a new system of things is about to commence. If I am asked, whether I expect that ministers will ever make peace with sincerity? I answer, No! In some circumstances I can conceive that they may conclude a peace which might be preferable to this destructive war; and I believe that they will, ere long, be compelled to conclude one of some kind or other. But that they will ever be authors of a peace which will heal the wounds the war has inflicted, which will sooth national animosity, which will justify a reduction of our forces, which will render it possible to lighten the oppressive load of taxes—that they will make a peace of conciliation, I confess that I have no hope. I do not say, that there is but one man in the kingdom capable of making a solid peace. God forbid! I believe that there are many. But I do not scruple to say that a solid peace can be concluded only upon the principles of that one man.—Who that man is, it is needless for me to mention, and his principles are equally well known. All right to interfere with the internal concerns of other nations, must be disclaimed; and for commanding due respect to the constitution, we must trust to the good sense and loyalty of the people, and disdain the idea that jacobinism can make any impression upon England. That such a peace may produce the blessings and benefits which peace is calculated to confer, the rights of the people must be attended

to, the constitution must be restored. Without national liberty, national happiness can neither be great in its degree, extensive in its sphere, or long in its duration. Those bonds which now slavishly bind down the inhabitants of this country, which break the spirit of the people, which render impossible the expression of the public voice, must all be completely removed. Till then, while war continues, our sufferings must be aggravated, and they will be but slightly alleviated even by the arrival of peace."

Mr. Sheridan concluded with moving,—"That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, humbly to assure him that we have taken into our most serious consideration the papers relative to the negotiation for peace with France, and that the result of our reflections on this important subject, founded as well on due examination of the documents now referred to us, as on experience of the past conduct of most of His Majesty's allies, is an humble, but earnest desire, that His Majesty will omit no proper opportunity which may arise, consistently with the good faith ever preserved on the part of His Majesty, of entering into a separate negotiation with the government of France for a speedy and honourable peace; and farther to implore His Majesty, not to sanction any new engagements which shall preclude such a mode of negotiation."

For the motion 35; *against it* 156.

MAY 14, 1802.

DEFINITIVE TREATY.

Mr. SHERIDAN.—"Sir, at this late hour, (about two o'clock), it is with extreme reluctance I rise to address the house, and to trespass upon your time and patience. I shall not be singular to-night in the professions I make you of avoiding details; but,

Sir, in one respect my conduct will differ from any other gentleman who has addressed you. I will *keep my word.* (*A laugh.*) If I feel repugnance to rise at so late an hour, I feel equally strange with respect to the unpopularity which I fear I must experience. It is natural to every person to have pleasure in voting in a majority, though to that pleasure, I believe, I have long been a stranger. Among the strange things we are continually witnessing, is the strange division of parties at present in this house. Sir, I have heard it said, that there are about twelve or thirteen different parties among us; nay, some carry the number much farther. Now I scarcely expect a single vote with me beyond that little circle of a constitutional party, who have for the last ten years been the objects of so much unqualified abuse; but those men who have so often been held up to public opprobrium, are the very same men whose every prediction has been fulfilled, and every fear realized. The discussion of this necessary, but disgraceful treaty of peace to-night, is a confirmation of the propriety of their political conduct during the whole course of the war. My friends must feel poignant shame and deep humiliation at the situation to which by these terms this country is reduced, but which they have labored steadily to avert. Those who oppose this peace have been arraigned by the last speaker, as aiming at a censure on the issue of the negotiations, and on the ministers themselves. And certainly, Sir, their object is to condemn the peace, and to cast a slur on the abilities of His Majesty's ministers. But, in this conduct of theirs, they have at least the merit of being consistent. I support the peace, because I feel confident no better terms, considering all circumstances, could be got. Their predecessors had taken care of that. They had left them no choice, but between an expensive, bloody, and fruitless war, and a perilous and hollow peace. They have chosen the best of the alternatives. Now, says the minister, they who

oppose me, depress the country. I thank these *new* oppositionists for their manly firmness in coming forward, and opposing, upon their own principles, this degrading treaty. Let the people of this country be fully aware of all the circumstances of the peace. *They* have done their duty, then, in thus publicly discussing them. But a right honorable gentleman—not here this evening—an ex-minister too—suspects something more. If he has not altered his opinion since the preceding day, he suspects their motives. They, says he, disapproved the treaty, and attack administration, because they wish to drive out ministers, and succeed to their places, and for that purpose they have formed a confederacy. Truly, Sir, a heavy charge! But, I must declare, that they have never veiled their opinions. Some of them especially have been at all times very open, and I conceive that it would be high injustice to suspect them, upon slight grounds, of a dirty cabal to turn out the present ministers: Says the right honorable gentleman, upon their principles, they would never have made peace. Why so, we have always said! It is now therefore confirmed, that a leading part of the late ministry acted upon such principles. But the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas) the preceding day denounced their foul ambition, and their design to *trip* up the *heels* of their *successors!* Another great discovery is now made—These persons' principles were such as rendered a peace *impossible,* and yet the very men who say so, have just been *thanking* them *all,* as the *saviours* of the country!!! Can the right honorable gentleman account for this inconsistency? I should think not; and yet he looks so confidently, I almost think he could. He thought I was cheering him as if I did not suppose him a constant supporter of the war, and he assures the house "he was a steady friend to it!" But he has now found out that it was necessary to stop. Pray, why not have stopped a little sooner? Why not be-

fore you were so much exhausted? For instance, when Buonaparte made you an offer? Now, however, he finds the necessity of peace. But is this such a peace as will give us real repose? Consider your debt and taxes, and the necessity which seems to be at length coming upon us of keeping up a peace establishment unknown in this country. It is lamentable to see *you all* split into *miserable parties*, when your *great enemy* is uniting every possible means of extending his power! You are squabbling about the measuring of ribands and tapes, and the paltry revenues of Malta, when much greater objects are before you! The events of every day seem to call more and more for the expression of that public feeling, that the time will come when French encroachments and oppression must cease, and when the voice of this country must be clearly raised against their atrocious and tyrannical conduct! The right honorable gentleman says "we have preserved our *honor!*" Honor depends more on the manner of doing a thing than on the thing itself. We had a great armament at the time of negotiation, but I don't hear that it carried any point whatever! This, says he, is a peace in which we relinquish nothing, and gain much! Will any man of common sense undertake to prove that? I defy him to name the single *object*, ever varying, ever shifting, unrelinquished. What did we go to war for? Why, to prevent French *aggrandizement*. Have we done that? No. Then we are to rescue Holland! Is that accomplished or relinquished? No. Brabant was a *sine qua non!* Is it gained? No. Then come *security* and *indemnity!* Are they obtained? No. The late minister told us, that with the example of a jacobin government in Europe, founded on the ruins of the holy altar, and the tomb of a martyred monarch, was a spectacle so dreadful and infectious to Christendom, that we could never be safe while it existed, and could do nothing short of our very last effort for its destruction. Now, Sir, let us see what

we have got. But what have we laid out for all these *fine words*, which at last gave way to *security* and *indemnity?* Why near 200,000 *lives*, and 300 *millions* of money! And we have gotten Ceylon and Trinidad. I should propose, that, as we have given to our heroes titles from the places where their laurels were won, our St. Vincents, Nelsons of the Nile, &c. so we should name Ceylon *Security Island Isle of Indemnity!!!* Now, if we look at the state of Europe, we find the noble lord opposite has a most curious and convenient epithet, which he applies to what is rather a disagreeable object to him (Lord Hawkesbury!) He talks of its being in an *uncomfortable*—Was it?—Oh no!—*unsatisfactory state.* Germany, Holland, Italy, they are all in an unsatisfactory state; and so I suppose is Switzerland, which now seems likely to undergo a division among her powerful and generous neighbours. That innocent and virtuous, suffering, venerable country is now, I suppose, in *an unsatisfactory state!* But Great Britain is all this time far from languor. She is in a *satisfactory state.* However, a grave and learned gentleman (Master of the Rolls) tells us for our comfort, that, notwithstanding all that has happened, here we all are debating and doing business in *all the old forms* and *customs* of the house! Pray now, could not this have happened, supposing we had never gone to war? I think he should have made that out before he congratulated us so warmly upon our present debate under all the *old forms* of the house!" The minister, too, goes on according to *old forms*: he has his majorities, according to *custom.* Prussia can go on too in its old forms! Is this armed repose, this hollow peace, then, the fruit of our long and glorious war! A great deal too has been said to be gained by the disposition of France to lay aside jacobinism. But the grand consolation of all, is in looking to Buonaparte as the *extirpator of jacobinism.* The learned gentleman, however, states to this house, that it is

the nature of jacobinism, if driven from any country, always to look with pride and ambition to a settlement in the place where it had birth, and to fix itself there. So now, this "*child and champion of jacobinism*," as he was styled, is to become a parricide. The *child of sin* is to *destroy his mother!* As this jacobinism is by the late minister stated to be a vice never to be eradicated from the *bosom* when it has *once* been implanted, all Europe will, doubtless, look to this great consul for its destruction. Indeed, he seems very desirous of extending his care to his neighbours! Suppose you make him *King of Europe at once*, and he will soon extirpate all the jacobinism that infests it! My alarms begin when the alarms of some persons cease. The great question about the dangers of the French revolution were always upon the degree of the danger to be apprehended. Some danger was always allowed; but to suppose the people of this country so miserably infatuated as to fall in love with dirt, and blood, and guillotines, with all the atrocious deformities of the system of Roberspierre, and that now when France is "covered with glory"—though certainly without liberty, or any thing that much resembles it—there should be nothing to dazzle and captivate, is out of my comprehension. If there be in this country men of dangerous ambition, Buonaparte is the man to hold out to them, by his ambitious and successful conduct, an example!—An example how much stronger than any thing that could attract the people in the exhibitions of riot and murder, unsociality and ferocity of manners! But they say, he has begged pardon of God and man by his piety and penitence!! No; he has restored bishops with the salaries of curates, and made them all spies and informers in his favor by a solemn oath! He has made his own use of them all. How has he acted to Switzerland? How to us? Why, by condescending to receive our humiliating submission of every thing you had acquired by the prowess of your army and navy! I

must trust to our valour to defend us against his armies; and I pray Heaven to protect us against the effects of his *penitence* and *piety!* I must confess that nothing has been stated against this peace unaccompanied by proofs. I had rather given to France Malta, and taken the Cape, than have made this absurd arrangement. If the late Secretary for the *War* Department were here—who is, perhaps, *(looking at Mr. Pitt)* by *proxy*—he might have made a whimsical charge against the present minister. *He* (Mr. Dundas) said, that "the minister who should give up the *Cape* would *deserve to lose his head!!!*" There sits the minister, however, with his head safe upon his shoulders. I have almost a mind to attack him on the authority of Mr. Dundas! Malta would have been a great acquisition to us, and therein I agree with the War Secretary. It would have stood, with the British standard flying in the centre of the Mediterranean, "like a great sea-mark saving those that eye it!" Ministers say the Emperor of Russia would not take care of Malta. If they will tell me so upon *their honor*, I will believe them; otherwise, upon *my honor*, I won't believe any body that says so. That did not appear to be Paul's idea of it. Perhaps he was mad. There was, however, some *method* in his *madness;* but, Sir, there's a message Buonaparte has sent to his tribunate concerning some Russian soldiers, who are to go and take good care of the Republic of the Seven Islands, and they may probably be intended for Alexandria, and may be connected with some plan against Turkey. Sir, if any *thing* in the *shape* of a *statesman* will say in this house, that he looks at that power, "*at which the world turns pale*," without apprehension, as the minister seems to tell us to-night, I must say he has a prodigious *stock of courage*, or no *skill* at all in *politics!* But let France have colonies! Oh, yes! Let her have a good trade, that she may be afraid of war, says the learned member! that's the way

to make him love peace. He has had, to be sure, a sort of military education! He has been abroad, and is rather *rough company;* but if you put him behind the *counter* a little, he will mend exceedingly! When I was reading the treaty, I thought all the names of foreign places, viz. Pondicherry, Chandenagore, Cochin, Martinico, &c. all *cessions.* Not they: they are all so many *traps* and *holes* to catch this silly fellow in, and make a *merchant* of him! I really think the best way upon this principle would be this: Let the merchants of London open a *public subscription,* and set him up at once! I hear a great deal respecting a certain *statue* about to be erected to the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) now *in my eye,* at a great expense. Send all that money over to the First Consul, and give him what you talk of so much, *capital,* to begin trade with. I hope the right honorable gentleman over the way will, like the First Consul, refuse a station for the present, and postpone it as a work to posterity. There is no harm, however, in marking out the place. The right honorable gentleman is musing, perhaps, on what square or place he will choose for its erection. I recommend the *Bank of England.* Now for the material. Not gold: No, no! he has not left enough of it. I should, however, propose *papier maché* and old bank notes! Ministers recommend us to make France commercial, for the sake of peaceful habits; and then tell us how impossible it is for her to increase in trade and commerce, for want of the necessary trade and capital. There my prospect was damped. I was going now to India, but I remember I promised to avoid detail. I must keep my word. There was some *Northern logic* here last night—something specious—a kind of *Northern lights*—pretty enough to look at, but not very useful, about our possessions having a better security in India without than with our enemy's recognition of our rights. This, I confess, I cannot

understand. The right honorable gentleman asks, whether they would have been justified in breaking off the treaty? That's a question between him and those who like the preliminaries; but it is otherwise with those who like neither. The Secretary at War (Mr. Yorke) has said, Buonaparte will look at us with "a *soldier's eye.*" I think he will with that of a *statesman!* Now the City Militia, and some other corps, are disbanded, it is not exactly a spectacle for a soldier's eye. One cannot walk along the streets without hearing doubts expressed of the nature and security of the peace! And the next great inquiry is, "Pray who is minister now?" Is there, then, an interior and an exterior prime minister?—one who appears to the world, and another secret, irresponsible, directing minister? Certainly, in several respects I have given my testimony in behalf of the present ministers. In nothing more than for making the best peace, perhaps, they could, after their predecessors had left them in such a deplorable situation. But the present ministers continue to identify themselves with the former. They have ministerially supported a refusal to inquire into the state of the country; just as they were about to take the government they have passed an *indemnity* bill, and since that a *security* bill, in a resolution of thanks; and these are the only *indemnity* and *security* required!!! The ex-ministers are quite separate and distinct, and yet they and the new ministers are all *honorable friends!* What is the meaning of this mysterious connection? Why don't the minister defend his peace as the only good grounds of defence? Does he hold that situation only to make peace, and leave it for his predecessor? Do they bargain for support on one side of talent, and on the other of power? No minister of this country ever condescended to act under such an incomprehensible connection, and to receive such equivocal support! Part of the case is clear. If the late minister

attacks the treaty, the present would turn round and say—" You brought me into a situation of necessity —You compelled me to sign a *disgraceful* treaty— You had been arrogant, and I have put up with indignity—Buonaparte, by his minister, Otto, would laugh at me!—This work is your's—You placed us in this sad dilemma! The minister takes no strong ground of defence: I won't say he dare not take it. There he sits to receive the *attack* of the *new* confederacy, who are not great in numbers, but in talents. The ex-minister is mounted on a kind of *hill fort* to fire down on the *assailants*, but the *garrison* is all manned with *deserters* from the principles of the war! I should like to support the present minister on fair ground; but what is he? a sort of *outside passenger*—or rather a man leading the horses round a corner, while reins, whip, and all, are in the hands of the coachman on the *box! (looks at Mr. Pitt's elevated seat, three or four benches above that of the Treasury).* Why not have an union of the two ministers, or, at least, some intelligible connection? When the ex-minister quitted office, almost all the *subordinate* ministers kept their places! How was it that the whole family did not move together? Had he only one *covered waggon* to carry *friends and goods?* Or has he left directions behind him that they may know where to call? I remember a fable of *Aristophanes's:* it is translated from Greek into decent English. I mention this for the country-gentlemen. It is of a man that sat so long on a seat (about as long, perhaps, as the ex-minister did on the treasury-bench) that he grew to it. When Hercules pulled him off he left all the sitting part of the man behind him! The house can make the allusion. This is not a noble, manly kind of coalition between these gentlemen. Of that ex-minister I would just say, that no man admires his splendid talents more than I do. If ever there was a man formed and fitted by nature to benefit his country, and to give it

lustre, he is such a man. He has no low, little, mean, petty vices. He has too much good sense, taste, and talent to set his mind upon ribands, stars, titles, and other appendages and idols of rank. He is of a nature not at all suited to be the creature or tool of any court. *(Mr. Pitt bowed repeatedly.)* But while I thus say of him no more than I think his character and great talents deserve, I must tell him how grossly he has misapplied them in the politics of this country; I must tell him again how he has augmented our national debt, and of the lives he lost in this war. I must tell him he has done more against the privileges of the people, increased more the power of the crown, and injured more the constitution of his country than any minister I can mention. Of the resignation of the late ministry, I don't believe one word of what is said about Catholic emancipation. I could as soon believe it was because they had discovered the longitude. If they did go out on that ground, they were certainly at liberty so to do. But after they quitted their situations they circulated a paper in Ireland, attributing the failure of an indispensible measure to resistance in a certain quarter, and that quarter was their *Sovereign*, and directing the Irish Catholics to look to *them* for hope of relief. If this was short of high treason, how far short of it I cannot define. If, however, that measure was necessary to carrying on hostilities, we have certainly done right so far in making this peace.

Mr. Sheridan concluded with stating, that he considered it fair to those who had entertained the sentiments he did, of the rise and progress of the war, to record the real grounds on which we approve of a peace, the terms of which are so inadequate and so insecure. Supposing that Mr. Windham's motion would be rejected, he had framed his in such a manner as to come as an amendment to Lord Hawkesbury's; and, according to the precedent of the other, might make it in the shape of a resolution,

by leaving out all the words of the address but *that*, and then proceed:

"It is the opinion of this house, That the omission of various opportunities of negotiating a peace with advantage to this country; and more especially the rejection of the overtures made by the Chief Consul of France, in January, 1800, appears to this house to have led to a state of affairs, which rendered peace so necessary, as to justify the important and painful sacrifices which His Majesty has been advised to make for the attainment thereof."

Mr. Sheridan's amendment was negatived without a division.

MAY 24.

BULL BAITING.

The second reading of the bill for abolishing Bull Baiting was read.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that he should most probably have given a silent vote, were it not for some points in the speech of the honorable gentleman who had just sat down (Mr. Frankland). He had previously attended to the speech of the right honorable gentleman who was so decided an opponent of the measure, and he could not help admiring the ingenuity, talents, and address which he had displayed in a speech which he thought well calculated to produce an effect on the imagination; but, perhaps, of all the speeches he ever heard, it was the least calculated to produce solid conviction. With respect to the support he received from the honorable gentleman who spoke last, he was at first rather dubious of it, and were it not for the animation of his manner, he really should have thought that he intended to follow the ironical line adopted by an honorable friend of his (Mr. S.) under the gallery—a great deal of what had been said, might be reduced to a short question, which, for the sake of illustration, he would put in the metaphorical

language of an honorable gentleman under the gallery, who said, as the higher orders of the people had their Billington, the lower orders should have their bull-baiting. Another member declared as an argument against the bill, that through the means of bull-baiting, he raised more men for His Majesty in Lancashire, and also more subjects in the way of increasing the population, than by any other means he knew. This might be an admirable argument to influence a recruiting serjeant, but that any one should think, that it could have an effect on a grave and deliberating assembly of legislators, more especially, when it produced effects which involved considerations of vice and profligacy on the part of women, was to him a little extraordinary. In some countries the disgraceful practice in question did not prevail, but that the measure could operate with respect to the country to which that honorable gentleman referred, either in relation to the excellent breed of bulls, or the sources of encreased population alluded to, was a little questionable. A few of the topics in the right honorable gentleman's (Mr. Windham) speech, however, he should have occasion to allude to; and first, with respect to the idea, that such subjects were unworthy the attention of the legislature. After warmly animadverting on what he had said respecting the estimation and progress of private bills in that house, Mr. Sheridan proceeded to express his surprise, that if the right honorable gentleman thought the subject so low, so trifling, as to be utterly unworthy of the interference of the legislature, he should have deemed it necessary to oppose the bill in a very long and elaborate speech, a speech which, in his mind, had rather been prepared for the occasion; in more points than one of it, the lamp was to be smelt; it possessed a climax of quotation, from modern as well as ancient authors. Xenophon, Virgil, Milton, and other writers were copiously referred to. All this matter too, was well arranged. If the right

honorable gentleman deemed the subject trifling, and unworthy of attention, why take all that trouble about it? Or if the right honorable gentleman had displayed so much ability and address, or made so great a figure in eloquence, while decrying the definitive treaty, he should not, most probably, have been in so small a minority. What, it was exclaimed, would Europe say, if at such a juncture, we occupied ourselves in such discussions? With respect to the right honorable gentleman's mode of considering as well as treating this question, he felt for him—he felt for the state of his mind, and for that irritation of which it must be susceptible in contemplating the return of peace, and he must allow for his feeling on the cessation of hostilities in every part of Europe; in which view it would appear, as if he wished to make some compensation to himself, in fomenting a war between the bulls and the dogs. It was rather extraordinary, that though the right honorable gentleman denied the subject to be of importance, yet he considered the measure to proceed from the combined effects of jacobinism and methodism, to overturn the constitution of the country; and another gentleman seemed to be of opinion, that if the lower order of the people were not indulged in the joyous and jovial practice of bull-baiting, the constitution must eventually be overturned. Another point respected the amusements of the lower orders of the people. With respect to these, nothing could give him greater pleasure, than that they could be effectually revised and reduced to a salutary system, founded on just and rational principles. He would bring to the right honorable gentleman's recollection a circumstance relative to this point, namely, a society which was some time ago established, in which an honorable general since dead (Burgoyne) was a leading member, and in which they both were concerned; the object of which was to revive the practice of the genuine old English sports and amusements: in this plan, however, it

was expressly set forth, that the barbarous practice of bull-baiting was not to be included. In regard to the argument held out, that if this custom was suppressed, we should not know where to stop, and that the amusements of hunting, shooting, and fishing, would become the next objects of suppression: To this idea he could shortly answer, that these amusements have no more analogy to the barbarous practice in question, than any thing the most opposite in their natures could have: and he must observe, with regard to the honorable gentleman who had beheld those scenes over and over again, that no man could advance such arguments or defend the practice, who had not been inured to it. But that gentleman said, the object was, not to torture the animal, that cruelty was not inflicted for the sake of cruelty; where was the difference in the effect, or in the tortures of the wretched animal, when the cruelty proceeded only from sport? He could conceive different sources of passion from which cruelty might arise, as wrath, malice, fear, cowardice, and worse than these was it when proceeding from beastly appetite, from the effect of gluttony; but certainly worse than any, or than all put together, was the nature of inflicting cruelty merely for sport. If the house suffered the bill to go to a committee, they could produce facts which must excite feelings of horror and indignation. What the honorable gentleman said of our deriving useful instructions from animals, was in a great degree well founded; but then it must be from animals in a free state of nature; in circumstances wherein, as the poet happily expresses it, you may

"Learn from the little Nautilus to sail:"

but not from animals in a state of coercion or torture. He expatiated with great feeling, animation, and effect, on the barbarous custom of bull-baiting, as not only producing the most inconceivable tortures to the wretched animal, and often to the instruments of his torment, but tending to deaden the

feelings of humanity in, and to brutalize the minds of the beholder, and at such sights women and children were often present: of this he stated some facts in illustration; among these, that of a brutal bull-baiter, who possessing an old bull-bitch, that lately had a large litter of puppies, was willing to show the staunchness of her blood, and the extent of her prowess; he set the bitch at the bull, she pinned, and fastened on him, and in that situation he literally cut her to pieces, the animal still keeping her hold. He then sold the puppies for five guineas a-piece; after this he took out his knife, and in a climax of brutality, cut the bitch's throat. These facts shewed the diabolical and malignant spirit with which such sports were conducted, and encouraging those, instead of making a people manly and generous, would, by inuring them to acts of cruelty, render them base, and fit to submit to the yoke of tyranny, and to bow to a vigor beyond the law; and to encourage them in such acts of barbarism would also render the people barbarous and tyrannical in their turn, teach them to oppress the weak, by rioting in the blood and tortures of dumb and unoffending animals, and on all occasions, as a sure result, to bow the neck to the yoke of power. Such practices surely called for the interference of the legislature; they degraded the national character, as well as brutalized the people, and had incontrovertibly extended to the length of *contra bonus mores*. Undoubtedly, as has been said, cruelties may be practised upon animals, and of the most shocking kinds, in circumstances which it was beyond the power of law to remedy. True, but if these practices were exhibited openly, they would become nuisances, and call for the interference of the legislature. Those bold and bare-faced practices, which exhibit their sanguinary details to the eye of day, should certainly be put down: it was a question, whether the existing laws may not be sufficient to remedy the evil, by the interference of the magistrates. However

that might be, the old law seemed to be worn out; its teeth could not be fixed upon the evil; it was the object of the present bill to remedy this defect, and to render the law efficacious.

General Gascoyne moved that the bill be read this day three months. The house divided. For the amendment 64; against it 5.

DECEMBER 8.

ARMY ESTIMATES—WAR WITH FRANCE.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose, and spoke to the following effect:—"Sir, being in the situation alluded to by the right honorable gentleman who had just sat down, of not being able to agree precisely with any of those who have preceded me, yet of being, at the same time, unwilling to give a silent vote on the present occasion, I rise with some sentiments of reluctance. There is one thing, however, in which we all coincide; it is, that the crisis in which we are placed, is so big with tremendous importance, so pregnant with mighty difficulties, so full of apprehensions and dangers, that the house and the country have a right to know what are the intentions and the views of those by whose exertions we may expect to be extricated from the complication of embarrassments, and snatched from the very brink of destruction. Sir, one of the circumstances I most regret in this debate is, the references that have been made to the characters and abilities of persons supposed to be fit to fill particular offices. I feel this as a subject of regret, and feeling so, I am sorry that my honorable friend near me made any allusion even to one man, whom of all men upon earth I most love and respect, because I do view the crisis to be one of such moment and peril, and because, if ever there was a time in which we should prove to the people of England that we are above all party feelings, that we are above all party distinctions, that we are superior to any petty scramble for places and power, that

time is the present.—Sir, in speaking upon these topics, I do find a disposition in some gentlemen to rebuke any man who shall deliver any opinion with respect to the First Consul of France. One honorable gentleman, who rebuked an honorable general that spoke before him, declared that he would not give his opinion with respect to the conduct of France to Switzerland; and what does his rebuke amount to? He confesses that upon that subject there can be but one opinion. Why then, Sir, he either adopts the opinion of the honorable general or not. If he does adopt it, he gives as strong an opinion against the conduct of France as can possibly be given. If he does not adopt it, why then all we can say is, that there are two opinions. But what, he asks, has Switzerland to do with the question? It has this to do with it. The honorable general introduced the subject in this way; he contends that a power which is capable of such unprovoked aggression and such perfidy, is the power that ought to be watched. But the honorable gentleman goes on to assert, that we have nothing to do with the case of Switzerland, nothing to do with France, nothing but with her power:—Nothing but her power!—as if that were little. He asks too where is the great difference between France under the Bourbons and under her present ruler? Why, Sir, the honorable general inferred, from the conduct of France, that with her growing power she had a growing disposition to mischief. But is that power, demands the honorable gentleman, greater now than it was last June? Perhaps it is not, Sir. But her mischievous disposition is greater; and if I am asked to bring a proof of the truth of my assertion, I must bring the case of Switzerland. Sir, if I see a purposed contempt of the independence of a nation; if I see a perfidious disregard of the faith of treaties; if I see a power withdraw her assistance, only to return and entrap a country of freemen with greater certainty; why then I say there has been a

change, and a great change too, and that such a power we have a right to watch. But, says the honorable gentleman, we have no right to make use of invectives against the First Consul of France. I will abstain if I can; I say if I can, because I feel that even a simple narrative may be construed into invective. With regard to the general question of a disposition to peace or war, I for one declare, that I am as strongly and as sincerely for the preservation of peace as any man, and that I do not consider war as any remedy for the evils complained of. If a war spirit be springing up in this country, if a chivalrous disposition be observable, if a sentiment of indignation be rising upon the subject of the treatment of Switzerland, I for one shall contend that the treatment of Switzerland is no cause of war. I would therefore say, preserve peace if possible: peace if possible, because the effects of war, always calamitous, may be calamitous indeed, buckling, as we should be forced to do, all our sinews and strength to that power in a contest with her upon such grounds. I repeat, therefore, peace if possible; but I add, resistance, prompt, resolute, determined resistance to the first aggression, be the consequences what they may. Influenced by these sentiments, I shall vote cordially and cheerfully for this large peace establishment; and it is because I shall vote for it that I think myself bound to state my reasons. Sir, some gentlemen seem to consider what they advance as so many axioms too clear to need explanation or to require defence. But when I vote so large an establishment, I think myself not at liberty to bind such a burthen upon my constituents, without stating the grounds upon which I act, and the principles by which I am prompted. Sir, I have listened with all the attention I am master of to the different arguments that have been advanced in the present debate. One honorable gentleman who spoke second, appears to be a decided enemy to a great establish-

ment, and the reasons he gave for his opposition, I confess, perfectly astonished me. Luckily he has no rapid flippancy in his manner; his sentiments are delivered too soberly and sedately to be mistaken. I am sure I mean nothing disrespectful to that gentleman, who amply repays the attention that is paid to him. But he says, if ministers had only said to him that danger existed, he would for one have voted for the force proposed. Does he doubt the danger? He complains that His Majesty's ministers do not state it precisely. But does he pretend that he does not see and feel it? Can any one look at the map of Europe and be blind to it? Can any one have a heart to resist apprehended injury, and say that we ought not to be prepared? But he asks, why raise only eleven hundred thousand men? You can never equal the military power of France, and as you cannot, why stop at eleven hundred thousand? Why not raise one hundred and twenty, one hundred and thirty, or one hundred and forty thousand? If this argument be worth any thing, it applies equally to our raising only one thousand. Why, if we can never be equal to France, raise a man? Another gentleman, who spoke last, has alluded to alliances, and I agree perfectly with him in what he advanced against making any pledges. He has alluded to the fate of the pledges made in the war of the succession, in the war of 1741; but if he meant to be impartial, he need not have gone back so far; he need not have travelled beyond the last war; he might have mentioned the pledges then given; he might have recollected the pledge of never giving up the Netherlands; he might have recalled to our minds the pledge of obtaining indemnity for the past, and security for the future; he might have dwelt upon the pledge of exhausting the last drop of our blood in the contest for religion, order, and civilized society, the *toto certatum corpore regni;* he might have reminded us of all these

pledges made, and of all of them having been abandoned. He confesses his warmth of friendship for the late minister, and he certainly never shewed it more than in stopping so short with his historical narrative of pledges. The next excellent reasoning of the honorable gentleman who spoke second against the proposed vote is, that the first year of war there will be an immense army drawn upon the opposite coast, and therefore, now it is not necessary to be prepared. When the army is upon your shores, when the trumpet of the enemy sounds at your gates, then it is time to be prepared. Appearance of security, he contends, gives, often, the effect of security. If we have large armies, France will think we raise them through fear; if we do not have them, she will think that we feel ourselves perfectly secure. I have heard instances, Sir, where mounting wooden guns upon a fort has produced the same security as if there had been real ones. But unluckily in this instance for us, by our constitutional form of proceeding, our whole force must be known: we cannot pass upon an enemy wooden guns, and an army at Brentford. If we vote no force, an enemy will know we have none. But have no arms, throw away your guns, is the advice of the honorable gentleman. Sir, when every house in my neighbourhood has been attacked and robbed by a gang of ruffians, how my having no arms is to save me from a visit from them, I must leave the honorable gentleman to explain. His next argument is, that it is unreasonable in us to believe that Buonaparte wishes to be at war with us; for he thinks the French have nothing to gain by invasion. Nothing to gain? What else have they to lose but that of which it has been said they have so much to spare, and what have they not to gain? Sir, I cannot but think this as unbecoming a sentiment as ever was uttered. But it is unreasonable to think that the French wish to meddle with us. Why, I protest I cannot explain. If, as has been said, they have felt our arms, they who have been every where else

successful, cannot but view the only power whose arms they have felt with feelings of warm resentment, and with sentiments of mortified pride. But look at the map of Europe; there, where a great man (who, however, was always wrong on this subject) said he looked for France, and found nothing but a chasm. Look at that map now, and see nothing but France. It is in our power to measure her territory, to reckon her population, but it is scarcely within the grasp of any man's mind to measure the ambition of Buonaparte. Why, when all Europe bows down before him—why, when he has subdued the whole continent, he should feel such great respect for us, I am at a loss to discover. If then it be true, as I have stated, that his ambition is of that immeasureable nature, there are abundant and obvious reasons why it must be progressive—reasons much stronger than any that could have been used under the power of the Bourbons. They were ambitious, but it was not so necessary for them to feed their subjects with the spoils and plunder of war; they had the attachment of a long established family applied to them; they had the effect and advantage of hereditary succession. But I see in the very situation and composition of the power of Buonaparte a physical necessity for him to go on in this barter with his subjects, and to promise to make them the masters of the world if they will consent to be his slaves. I see then, I repeat, this strong reason for his pursuing this system of policy. If that be the case, must not his most anxious looks be directed to Great Britain? Every thing else is petty and contemptible compared with it. Russia, if not in his power, is at least in his influence—Prussia is at his back—Italy is his vassal—Holland is in his grasp—Spain at his nod—Turkey in his toils—Portugal at his foot:—when I see this, can I hesitate in stating my feelings, still less can I hesitate in giving a vote that shall put upon our guard against the machinations and workings of such an ambition? But it has been said, that it is possible he may mean

nothing more than rivalry of commerce. Happy, Sir, shall I be if such an idea enter into his head at all, much more if it form part of his plans. But I confess that I cannot see that it does. I mark him taking positions calculated to destroy our commerce, but I do not find him doing any thing for the mutual benefit of the trade of the two countries. I see him anxious to take possession of Louisiana, and to use the ports of St. Domingo to carry out West India and Jamaica trade. I can conceive a possible case, in which such positions might be taken as to force us to surrender our commerce without a stroke. An ignorant observer may see two armies, and may say there is no war, because there is no battle; yet one of them may make such movements as to compel the other to surrender without striking a blow.

Of the commercial talents of Buonaparte, I can be supposed to know but little; but bred in camps, it cannot be imagined that his commercial knowledge can be very great; and, indeed, if I am rightly informed, he is proceeding in the old plan of heavy duties and prohibitions. But he would go a shorter way to work with us. The old country has credit and capital, and commercial enterprise; and he may think, if he can subjugate us, that he can carry them off to France like so many busts and marbles. But he would find himself mistaken; that credit would wither under the gripe of power; that capital would sink into the earth, if trodden upon by the foot of a despot. That commercial enterprise would, I believe lose all its vigour in the presence of an arbitrary government. No, Sir, instead of putting his nation apprentice to commerce, he has other ideas in his head. My humble apprehension is, that, though in the tablet and volume of his mind there may be some marginal note about cashiering the King of Etruria; yet, that the whole text is occupied with the destruction of this country. This is the first vision that breaks upon him through

the gleam of the morning; this is his last prayer at night, to whatever Deity he addresses it, whether to Jupiter or Mahomet; to the Goddess of Battles, or the Goddess of Reason. But, Sir, the only consolation is, that he is a great philosopher and philanthropist. I believe this hyper-philanthropy has done more harm than ever it did good. He has discovered that we all belong to the Western family. Sir, I confess I feel a sentiment of deep indignation, when I hear (I take it from report) that this scrap of nonsense was uttered to one of the most enlightened of the human race. To this family party I do not wish to belong. He may invite persons, if he please, to dinner, and, like Lord Peter, say, that this tough crust is excellent mutton. He may toss a sceptre to the King of Etruria to play with, and keep a rod to scourge him in the corner; he may have thought at first his Cisalpine Republic a fine growing child, and may have found it a ricketty bantling; but I feel contempt for all this mockery. Let us, Sir, abstain from invective, only let us speak the truth. Why, Sir, what I have said is nothing but the truth. Let us be visiting acquaintance, but I do implore him not to consider us as one of the family. Perhaps, Sir, it is unnecessary for me to state any more reasons for voting for this large peace establishment. All I desire is, not to have it understood that in stating my fears, I speak from a well informed judgment. On that account it is that I say do not go to war; on that account it is that I state my apprehensions as rational grounds for great vigilance, and for strong preparation. Sir, there are two other points pressed by several gentlemen, to which I beg leave to refer. I mean the fitness of the persons in power, and the spirit of the people. The power of the country consists in its army, its navy, and its finance, in the talent and integrity of its ministers, and, above all, in the spirit of the people. Upon this second branch of the question, though I have said some things which may be con-

sidered as grateful to that party which may be denominated the war party, yet I fear I shall be compelled to state by and by some circumstances that may not be quite so agreeable to them. It is a matter of no importance to the house perhaps to know why I was absent on the two first days of the session. I am anxious to hear the part which men would take, and I do confess I never felt so much disgust at any circumstance, as to find on the first day of the session, instead of an unanimous vote for vigilance and preparation, a call from some to give us back our places. The noble Lord's friends may be divided into two classes; those who call for a change of ministers, and for war. And here I must say, Sir, for one, that I thank them for their frankness in stating what they have done, because their frankness is an antidote to the fury of their counsels. The noble lord says, we don't want to go to war; we only wish to have other persons in power; the noble lord deals with the ingenuousness of youth, as I say; with the experience of youth, according to others. But what should we get by this change? Would those persons he recommends have acted differently from the present ministers? Would they have gone to war for any of the events that have occurred since the peace? Would they have gone to war for the annexing of Piedmont to France?—for the Cisalpine Republic?—for the invasion of Switzerland? No, for none of these. They would have done as ministers have done, but more vigorously; they would have shewn more grumbling patience; they would have made wry faces; they would not have stood with their hands before them; no, but with their arms akimbo. What would they have got by this? Would they have obtained any thing more by all this grudging and wincing?—Would such a mode of conduct have become the character and dignity of the country? Sir, it is not to be inferred, because the right honorable gentleman opposite me did none of these things, that he

felt no indignation. I learn from His Majesty's speech, every word of which I approve, that his ministers are determined not to be shut out of the continent. I say, Sir, I approve of the speech, because it satisfied me that a sense of wrong, and a resentment of injury, may live under moderate language. But these ministers, it seems, are the incapable gentlemen. Will gentlemen shew us any act of base submission on their part? If they can; if they prove that they did any act with respect to Switzerland, and meanly retracted it afterwards, I will be the first to inveigh against them. But these gentlemen shew us no such acts; they seem as if they considered the ministers, now the drudgery of signing the peace is done, as *functi officiis*, and as if they ought to go out; as if one was a mere goose quill, and the other a stick of sealing wax, which are done with, and ought to be thrown under the table. We know that *Touchstone* says, as a good ground of quarrel, "That he don't like the cut of a certain courtier's beard." Perhaps this capricious dislike cannot be better exemplified than by the sentiment expressed in the well known epigram of Martial:—

> Non amo te, Sabidi, nec possum dicere quare,
> Hoc tantum possum dicere, non amo te!

The English parody may be more applicable to these gentlemen:—

> I do not like thee, Dr. Fell,
> The reason why I cannot tell;
> But this, I'm sure, I know full well,
> I do not like thee, Dr. Fell.

It is fair, Sir, to say, that this English parody, so unfavourable to the Doctor, proceeds from the mouth of a fair lady, who has privileges to like and dislike, which would ill become a member of this house. Sir, I contend that no solid reason has been offered to be urged against these ministers. How,

I would ask, has the right honorable gentleman forfeited the confidence of the people? And why are we told that there is but one man alone that can save the country. But it seems, and I must frankly confess, that I was utterly astonished when I heard such an assertion made use of, that His Majesty's ministers assumed the reins of government at a most inviting period. Sir, I defy any man to shew me a period of greater difficulty. The right honorable gentleman who, in the chair of this house, had so amply deserved and secured the respect of every member in it, could not but have quitted it with feelings of regret.—But the expeditions to the Baltic and to Egypt were prepared: true; yet was success certain? Was it not the act of chance, and the great skill shewn by the noble Admiral (Nelson) that brought the expedition to the Baltic to a favorable issue? Did the late ministers conceal their fears with respect to the expedition to Egypt? That it was most glorious in its event, and that the country ought to bind the brows of the meanest soldier engaged in it with laurels, I am ready to allow. But it cannot be denied, that, after the expedition had been off the coast in Italy, and was in Marmorice Bay, orders were sent to stop the expedition altogether. With respect to the negociations for peace, their predecessors knew that the present ministers would have to deal with men who, it might be supposed, would be glad of an occasion to retort the insolence of Lord Grenville's letter. If the enemy had parodied their letter as their only answer to us, if they had said we will wait for experience and the evidence of facts, with respect to the new ministry; if they had said, restore that old whig constitution which the former ministers have so impaired, we might have thought such conduct trifling, and beneath them; but we could not have questioned its fairness. Sir, though His Majesty's ministers must have been prepared to expect humiliation, yet they made peace, I will venture to say,

on terms comparatively more advantageous to the country than those that were offered at Lisle. Of these ministers, Sir, I know also that they have not renewed any of their predecessor's oppressive acts. But this, some gentlemen will contend, is a proof of their weakness and unfitness. Never too, Sir, did the Treasury interfere so little in the general election. This again may be advanced by some as an instance of their incapacity. Nay, the North was left almost to a member of the late administration. When, therefore, gentlemen talk in future of Mr. Pitt's being the fittest person to save the country, they ought to add also the name of Mr. Dondas. But what did these gentlemen expect from the present Chancellor of the Exchequer? We treated him, when in the chair of this house, with the respect he merited. He has, I believe, Sir, over our present worthy Speaker, the advantage in attitude; but did they expect that when he was minister he was to stand up and call Europe to order? Was he to send Mr. Colman, the Serjeant at Arms, to the Baltic, and order the Northern powers to the bar of the house? Was he to see the powers of Germany scrambling like members over the benches, and say, Gentlemen must take their places? Was he expected to cast his eye to the Tuscan gallery, and exclaim, that strangers must withdraw? Was he to stand across the Rhine, and say, the Germans to the right, and the French to the left? If he could have done all these things, I for one should always vote, that the Speaker of the house should be appointed the minister of the country. But the right honorable gentleman has done all that a reasonable man could expect him to do. Sir, I confess, I wish to know what Mr. Pitt himself thinks. I should be glad to hear what his sentiments are of the call made for him, and loudly made too, in another place by a vigorous statesman. I well remember, Sir, and so do we all, the character he gave of the present administration. The justice

of his character of the First Lord of the Admiralty, no man can question. Of the accuracy of his judgment, with respect to the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, it does not become us to entertain a doubt. The noble Secretary of State was better qualified for the situation than any man in the country, with an exception made, I believe, in favor of my honorable friend (Mr. Fox) near me. Does Mr. Pitt mean to retract that character? I cannot suppose he does. I must believe that he left, in his judgment, the best administration that could be left. I have heard some gentlemen attach to the present ministry the appellation of a mawkish mixture; but if I were to compare them to any thing, I should say, that Mr. Pitt, and the Ex-Secretary of War, acted as men fond of wine (which I certainly do not mean to impute to them as a fault), and drinking a bottle of Tokay. Though you may take what appears to be the best, and leave only what seems to be the lees, yet if you only pour a bottle of good white wine upon them, you have as good a bottle of Tokay as ever. Sir, I think the mixture as good and as wholesome to the constitution as it could have been. I am sure I hear with joy that it is not on account of ill health that the right honorable gentleman to whom I have alluded is absent. I repeat, Sir, when I see so many persons anxious about that gentleman, I am glad to hear that his health is re-established. But how, I would ask, can we, with any consistency, turn out the man who made the peace, to bring in the person who avowed his approbation of it? Sir, it is since that peace was made that gentlemen had voted a statue to Mr. Pitt; but whenever they erect that statue, let them cover it with laurels so as not to shew its nose; yet still a piece of the olive must go with it, for he approved and supported the peace. Sir, I cannot persuade myself to think he is playing a double game, or that he has retracted the opinion he delivered in this house; but every thing should stand

plain, every thing should be explicit. I have heard of one person playing two different games at chess, for two different persons at the same time; but I never heard of a person playing one of his hands against the other. I suspect, therefore, there has been some mistake in the telegraphic communication; that the political Philidor's game has been misunderstood; that his friends have displaced a knight and a castle, when they should only have taken two pawns; that they have made an attempt to checkmate the King, when they had no instructions for doing it. Sir, I cannot forget the period when the august personage of the Sovereign was held up as the only man who was against extending privileges to the Catholics in Ireland; and I cannot, therefore, brook the idea of calling that right honorable gentleman back to power, and forcing him upon the crown. I expected when I came into this house to hear much said against Buonaparte, but I had not the slightest expectation of hearing any thing against the prerogative of the crown. Mr. Pitt the only man to save the country! No single man can save the country. If a nation depends only upon one man, it cannot, and, I will add, it does not deserve to be saved; it can only be done by the parliament and the people. Sir, I say, therefore, I cannot believe that there is a back and a fore door to this Egerian grotto. We have all heard, I dare say, of a classical exhibition in this town, *The Invisible Girl.* Here, however, I hope we shall have no whisperings backwards and forwards, no speaking through tubes, no invisible agency. I hope, too, that we shall have it declared, as it ought to be, that these opinions, which have been rumored about, are unfounded. I shall now address a few words to those gentlemen who would hurry us into war; and here, Sir, I must say, that of all persons living, the Ex-Secretary of War is the last man who can consistently call out for war. He despised the warning voice of my honorable

friend; he turned a deaf ear to his predictions, that we should only consolidate and strengthen the power of France. His answers always were as if he should despise the power of France, could he but see jacobinism destroyed. Is it not destroyed?

> "Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear;
> The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcanian tiger—
> Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
> Shall never tremble—"

The right honorable gentleman's wishes are gratified; jacobinism is killed and gone, and by whom? By him who can no longer be called the child and champion of jacobinism—by Buonaparte. I remember to have heard jacobinism compared to Antæus, who gained strength at every throw: but Buonaparte proceeded like Hercules; he gave it a true fraternal hug, and strangled it. Did the French annex Piedmont, did they enter Switzerland with the Rights of Man? Did they talk of those rights when Buonaparte told the people of Italy they were a set of dolts and drivellers, and were unfit to govern themselves? But now the right honorable gentleman seems in a greater fright than ever. He seems as if he had rather have the old ghost back again. Most whimsically he wants to unite all parties against France—

> Black spirits and white,
> Blue spirits and grey,

all are welcome to him. The moderate jacobins he takes to his bosom; they were only misled by their feelings. The violent jacobins he appeals to as men of proud spirits. He wishes to sing *Ca Ira* to them, and to head them all. Oh! had I, he sighs, but plenty of jacobins here! But on what principle would they carry on the war? If they were able to curtail the power of Buonaparte, would not their views increase, and would they ever stop without making an example of the regicide republic? If

they will speak out fairly, will they not confess this? Will the country, then, for such a purpose consent to turn out the present ministers? Sir, upon the spirit of the country I wish to say a few words. I have heard from one noble Lord, with regret, what I hope was but a slip, that the spirit of the country is worn out. I think that noble Lord must retract that idea. Sir, I certainly looked to the rejoicings at the peace as an unmanly and irrational exultation. Do I rebuke the people for rejoicing at the blessings of peace? No, Sir, but for rejoicing without asking about the terms. Did they rejoice that we had gained Trinidad and Ceylon? Would two farthing candles have been burnt less had we not obtained them? No, Sir, if they had believed that they had been fighting for civilized order, morality, and religion; and if, believing this, they exulted in such a peace, then it proves, that their spirit was worn out. But I allude to this, in order that the enemy may not be led into a mistake upon the subject. Sir, one of the disadvantages attending the present administration is, that they will not turn, when they are attacked by the last administration. They are hampered by the votes they gave for the war. But from the period of the allegations that it was a war for the Scheldt, I assert that it continued to be a war upon false pretences. The people were told that it was a war for religion and good order, and they found that peace was ready to be made at Lisle, without any reference to those causes. The right honorable gentleman says, what baseness, while religion was in their mouths, to consent to steal a sugar island. It is true, Sir, though it comes a little extraordinarily from that man who was one of the cabinet ministers at the time of the negociation at Lisle. It should appear as if there had indeed been great discord in the cabinet; there never was greater, says the honorable gentleman. They acted not merely like men in a boat, rowing different ways, but like men in the boat of a bal-

loon. Up the Ex-Secretary of War was ascending to the clouds, whilst Mr. Dundas was opening the valve and letting out the gas to descend; while one was throwing out ballast to mount to the most chivalrous heights, the other was attempting to let drop an anchor upon a West India island. Each of these ministers was suffered to have his favorite plan. The Ex-Secretary at War was allowed to nibble at the coast of France, the War Secretary of State to make a descent upon a sugar island; and thus they went on till the letter from Lord Grenville, that letter never to be forgotten; and, I will add, never to be forgiven, made its appearance, and the people took a deep and settled disgust. Why did this not appear? And this, Sir, ought to be a lesson to us. The mouths of the people were shut and gagged, and the government were acting without knowing any thing of their circumstances. Sir, in such circumstances, the integrity of their minds was disgusted, and they were glad to get rid of the war at any rate. Upon this subject I have dwelt the more particularly, because I wish Buonaparte not to mistake the cause of the joy of the people. He should know, that if he commits any act of aggression against them, they are ready to enter singly into the contest, rather than suffer any attack upon their honor and their independence. I shall proceed no further. I perfectly agree with my honorable friend, that war ought to be avoided, though he does not agree with me on the means best calculated to produce that effect. From any opinion he may express, I never differ but with the greatest reluctance. For him my affection, my esteem, and my attachment, are unbounded, and they will end only with my life. But I think an important lesson is to be learnt from the arrogance of Buonaparte. He says he is an instrument in the hands of Providence, an Envoy of God. He says he is an instrument in the hands of Providence to restore Switzerland to happiness, and to elevate

Italy to splendor and importance. Sir, I think he is an instrument in the hands of Providence to make the English love their constitution the better; to cling to it with more fondness; to hang round it with truer tenderness. Every man feels when he returns from France that he is coming from a dungeon to enjoy the light and life of British independence. Sir, whatever abuses exist, we shall still look with pride and pleasure upon the substantial blessings we still enjoy. I believe too, Sir, that he is an instrument in the hands of Providence, to make us more liberal in our political differences, and to render us determined, with one hand and heart, to oppose any aggressions that may be made upon us. If that aggression be made, my honorable friend will, I am sure, agree with me, that we ought to meet it with a spirit worthy of these islands; that we ought to meet it with a conviction of the truth of this assertion, that the country which has achieved such greatness, has no retreat in littleness; that if we could be content to abandon every thing, we should find no safety in poverty, no security in abject submission. Finally, Sir, that we ought to meet it with a fixed determination to perish in the same grave with the honor and independence of the country."

FEBRUARY 23, 1803.

PRINCE OF WALES'S ESTABLISHMENT.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer moved, "That His Majesty be empowered to issue annually to the Prince of Wales a sum not exceeding sixty thousand pounds."

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he would have wished to have abstained from troubling the house, but that some points were absolutely necessary to be explained. He was ready to admit the arguments employed in support of the proposition by the right honorable and learned gentleman (the Solicitor Ge-

neral) opposite to him; the proposition itself was equally satisfactory to those who wished to replace his Royal Highness in his constitutional splendor, and to those who watched with a jealous eye the expenditure of the public money. There was, however, one thing which did not appear to be admitted, and which he was particularly desirous should be stated; it was not admitted that the Prince of Wales, so far from burdening the public, had, on the contrary, made a considerable sacrifice to them; this certainly was the fact, and it should be known to the country. He was himself a real friend to the comforts and splendor which his Royal Highness ought to enjoy, but he was, at the same time, a greater friend to his honor and character. The Prince came forward for the third time. Upon the first application, notwithstanding the arguments employed by the learned and the unlearned, notwithstanding the vast fund of legal and historical erudition which was displayed, nothing was ascertained with regard to the petition of right. First, it was to be presented to the Lord Chancellor; then it was discovered that the Chancellor was not the proper person, but that the petition should be given to Lord Pelham. Afterwards it was to be laid before the Chancellor, and then it came into this house. An assurance had been given, that there was no compromise whatever, and that the Prince was at liberty to prosecute his suit; but, for his own part, he gave his support to the proposition, because the Prince did not come forward as a claimant upon the public, but asserting a just demand. As to the idea of a compromise, there appeared in that nothing of a disgraceful kind. An adjustment, by way of composition, when no other mode could be devised, was fair and satisfactory. The measure now adopted was, without doubt, the shortest; for had the suit gone on, it would have been spun out to a most tedious and insufferable length. The late Chancellor kept the papers in his pocket for six

years before he could make up his opinion; and if the suit had been carried on, it must, no doubt, have partaken of that glorious uncertainty which was one of the excellencies of the British laws. If he conceived the ground rightly, upon which the right honorable the Chancellor of the Exchequer formed his motion, it was to be understood that the sum was to be appropriated in immediately enabling his Royal Highness to resume the state and splendor appropriate to his high rank. He wished to know whether the house was to understand this to be the real fact? If so, he should have much greater pleasure in supporting the motion; but he begged to know from the right honorable gentleman if he was warranted from any authentic quarter to give this assurance to the house; because if they voted the sum under such an idea, and that afterwards it should be found that the resumption of that state, on the part of the Prince, was to be still protracted, much discontent and disappointment must be the natural consequence. Nor could that minister be fairly said to consult the honor of the Prince, in deceiving the house into a vote, under an idea, that by such vote his Royal Highness was to be immediately restored to his rank in life, when in reality he must remain under embarrassments that must still longer oblige him to remain in obscurity. But in all events, whatever the fact was, it ought to be fully understood. An honorable member had this night moved for the reading of some passages in his Majesty's message on a former occasion, respecting the Prince's affairs, in order to prove that the Prince was thereby precluded from any further claims upon parliament, because he was thereby constructively precluded from contracting any new debts. But although the letter of those passages certainly did not expressly restrict his Royal Highness from contracting debts, yet what he was ready to allow his Royal Highness was as firmly bound in honor upon that point to abstain from contracting new

debts, after the vote then passed, as if bound thereto by a condition worded in the strongest manner: but the fact was, his Royal Highness had contracted no new debts; nor had he made any claims on the public for payment of his former debts; for surely the submittal to excessive restraints upon his own income for the liquidation of his Royal Highness's debts, was not to be termed a burthen on the country for that purpose. But though his Royal Highness had contracted no new debts, yet it was to be recollected, that if those arrangements made with a former Chancellor of the Exchequer for the liquidation of his debts, had failed in some instances of their intended effect, the Prince, feeling himself bound in honor to make good the deficiency, was still embarrassed, under the sense of that honorable obligation. On the former occasion, a sum of 600,000*l.* was voted in advance to the Prince for the liquidation of his debts, to be vested in the hands of trustees; but when by public advertisement all the claims of his Royal Highness were called in, the aggregate was found to amount to 650,000*l.*; consequently there was a deficit of 50,000*l.* It was not thought advisable to make a further application to parliament; but the commissioners, to supply the deficiency, proposed to the creditors an abatement, on their respective debts, of no less than 10 per cent. This deduction was not upon claims considered as any ways fraudulent or over-charged, but upon debts fairly fitted, and admitted to be just and reasonable. This, he contended, was, in direct terms, compromising the honor of his Royal Highness; it was not paying, but compounding his debts; and his Royal Highness, he said, had authorized him to declare, on a former occasion, that he had much rather again apply to parliament, and solicit a restriction of one year more upon his income, in order to pay in full every claim against him, than submit to a measure which his Royal Highness conceived to be so degrading to his honor; nor could

he conceive that honor satisfied until he had paid the last farthing. If then his Royal Highness was still to remain burthened with claims, which he conceived himself bound, as debts of honor, to discharge, it was obvious the chief end proposed to the house, of enabling his Royal Highness immediately to resume his rank and appropriate splendor, would not be attained by the vote proposed. If it was said he was, in consequence of this vote, to be restored to his whole income, but not yet to resume his rank and state, in God's name let the circumstances be explained to the house; and some definitive time mentioned at which an expectation, so anxiously and so generally entertained by the nation, was really to be fulfilled.

The resolution was agreed to without a division.

MARCH 4.

PRINCE OF WALES'S ESTABLISHMENT.

Mr. Calcraft moved, "That the house, anxiously desirous to give full effect to the important objects contained in His Majesty's most gracious message of the 16th of February, do appoint a select committee to inquire into the embarrassments of the Prince of Wales, and into the most effectual means of relieving them as speedily as possible, in order to enable His Royal Highness to resume the splendor and dignity due to his exalted station."

Mr. SHERIDAN, after the manner in which this question had been deprecated, and the manifest indisposition that had been shewn on the other side to enter into it, thought it unnecessary to assure the house, that it was not his intention to detain them long. Unquestionably if a division were to take place, he should vote for the original motion; but so little real difference of opinion did he see, that he could have no apprehension of coming to a division, There was but one object professed on both sides, and he was sure the manner of attaining that object, though it might, in the first instance, strike gentlemen very differently, would not ultimately be a

cause of dissension. From the tardiness of the right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) and those about him, to reply to the arguments of his honorable friend (Mr. Fox), he had reason to conclude that they were ready to do that justice to his Royal Highness to which he is undoubtedly entitled. His Royal Highness, upon the gracious intention conceived by His Majesty, and communicated to the house by His Majesty's message, with the advice of his law officers, adopted the resolution of abandoning his claims to the duchy of Cornwall. There was no doubt but his Royal Highnes's advisers, as well the one who had a seat in that House (Mr. Erskine) as the one who had not (Mr. Adam), had given his Royal Highness the advice most consistent with his dignity. But it was not for the house to consider that he did not act on the authority of private communications; he was bound as a member of parliament not to do so. Was there any reason to believe that his Royal Highness was indifferent to the restoration of his rank and state, or to the restoration to the same rank of that family which had shared in his obscurity? Let gentlemen look to the communication made by his Royal Highness, and they would there find it acknowledged that he was not indifferent. This was not information from private authority. The house had it from his Royal Highness himself; they had it on the face of their journals. All opinions were therefore agreed as to the object that was to be attained. His honorable friend, if the form of his motion produced any difficulty, would, he was sure, not hesitate to change it to the shape that would be least exceptionable. Let it be said, that the house would consider of it. The right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) had said, his Royal Highness was in a situation in which it was not to be entered that he should continue one hour longer: that he was in a situation which he could not have that interchange of hospitality with

the noble families of the country which it was most material that the heir apparent of the crown should keep up: that he could not promote the arts, patronise talent, or contribute to the advancement of those various laudable institutions for which the present time was so remarkable. The house appeared to feel as the right honorable gentleman did; but now, as something more was required to accomplish the object, was the feeling of the house and the right honorable gentleman to be altered? We were told that those things must be endured, for which there was no remedy; but if there was a remedy, why should a great and confessed evil be longer endured? His attention to this subject had lately led him to look over what had been done in it in former times. He had found in the former debates a great deal of asperity, which he was sorry to find mingled with such a discussion. He was pleased to find that nothing of that kind had entered into the present discussion, with the exception of one honorable gentleman (Mr. Johnstone), whose accuracy in figures had been complimented by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, though that accuracy had commenced in miscalculation, and ended in false inference. The honorable gentleman declared himself sorry that a compromise had taken place. He, on the contrary, rejoiced at it, because much disagreeable consequence might result from the prosecution of the suit, and the legal advisers of his Royal Highness, who would give no advice inconsistent with his honor. The honorable gentleman conceived it an insult to the public to suppose that there is any balance due to his Royal Highness on the arrears. He was as little inclined to insult the public as the honorable gentleman; but he could not conceive the public so irritable as to fly into a rage at being called on to enter into an account on a matter in which the best informed persons were of opinion that there was a large balance against it. He gave the public credit for more justice and less irri-

tability than the honorable gentleman. The indelicacy of entering into such an account had also been mentioned. He knew of no indelicacy in it, except, indeed, in the set-offs which gentlemen made against the revenues of the duchy. Was the Prince to be told by his Royal Father, "It is true, I owe you a large arrear accumulated during your minority, but I have to deduct the expenses of your nursing and education; there is so much for your cradle, and so much for your pap, and so much for your books?" The whole of the indelicacy was in this. The Prince of Wales had shared the same education and the same maintenance which had been enjoyed by the Duke of York. They were both maintained out of the Queen's privy purse, and it was on the occasion of that maintenance that parliament had made so large and liberal a grant for Her Majesty's service. The honorable gentleman (Mr. Johnstone), said, that the settlement made in 1795 ought not to be changed, and that there was no reason why it should not be continued in 1803. That may be a good argument, but it came rather late. It ought to have been advanced when the original grant on His Majesty's message was proposed. The honorable gentleman held his tongue then, and now, when His Majesty's message had recommended the object to the house, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer had stated that the object was so important and desirable as to admit of no delay, when the house assented to the principle, and seemed to feel no other objection to the measure proposed on it, than that it did not go far enough, the honorable gentleman came out with this argument, which went against the bill brought in on the resolution of the house in every stage. The honorable gentleman adduced a curious reason for not doing more now than was done in 1795. He said it was particularly necessary that the Prince of Wales should keep a greater state than in 1795, and have more trappings and lords of the bedcham-

ber, &c. because there was then a great number of jacobins in the country. Thus, Sir, said Mr. S. though we did not know it before, and I am afraid the doctrine will not find many adherents among us even now, the jacobins are the greatest supporters of the splendor of the Royal Family; and as we are told in the fable of the two owls perched on a ruin, who said to each other when the tyrant who caused the devastation passed by—"Long live King Massand, for while he reigns we shall have plenty of ruined villages;" so our royal family should say, "Heaven send us plenty of jacobins, for they are the best support of our rank, and state, and dignity!" An honorable gentleman opposite (Mr. Cartwright), and the worthy baronet near him (Sir Robert Buxton), said that trappings were of no importance, that virtue was every thing, and they deprecated the assumption of state and rank accordingly. He had no objection to this doctrine, if the system, so early established, so invariably maintained, and handed down to us by our ancestors, was proved to be foolish. But let the rule be general, let not the splendor of one be curtailed, while that of another is extended. If, as a great man in this country (the late Earl of Chatham) had said, "Every feather of the royal bird aid his flight;" though he should not go to the length that noble lord did, in saying, "that when they drooped, or were shed, the bird would fall to the ground;" yet all should be cautiously preserved. In order to bring this contending system home to gentlemen's minds, let it be applied to the house—let it be supposed that the Speaker possessed sufficient dignity, and commanded sufficient respect by those virtues which it was acknowledged he possessed; let the chair be removed, let the other badges be stripped off, let that bauble (the mace) be taken away, let the fine house that was building for him, in which he hoped he would soon entertain the members with his accustomed hospitality and splendor, be demolished;

let the state coach be laid down, and instead of proceeding in it to St. James's, attended by a grand procession of members in their private coaches, let him go on foot with the addresses, covered with a warm surtout, and honored with the privilege of an umbrella in case of rain—*(loud bursts of laughter)*. Let the judges be conducted by no sheriffs, or sheriffs attendants, to the assize towns; let the chief justice go down in the mail coach, and the puisne judges content themselves with the travelling as outside passengers—*(A loud laugh)*. Let the Lord Mayor, instead of coming to Westminster-hall in the state-barge, accompanied by the several companies in their state-barges,—let him come in a plain wherry, without any attendants, and instead of going back to feast on turtle at Guildhall, with the great officers of state and foreign ambassadors, let him content himself with stopping on his way back, and taking a beef steak at Dolly's chop house *(loud laughing)*.—It was not easy to have done without citing instances in which the abridgement of their happiness, which foreigners admire, but which, according to these gentlemen, are quite simple and unnecessary in the Prince of Wales, may be effected with great saving to the public. The Prince of Wales was not indifferent to the resumption of his rank; he should be sorry he was, as he should not then have the high opinion of him that he had. The house may, therefore, well go a step beyond ministers. It was no consideration that ministers had done what they had, nor even that the Prince had abandoned his claims on the revenues of Cornwall in consequence. Let the house make its grant for the attainment of the object desired without reference to any of these things. The debts contracted since 1795 might, it was true, be brought forward as debts which the Prince of Wales ought to acknowledge, but which he should be sorry to make known. There would be that difference between money voted for these debts, and that voted on former occasions,

that no person would claim it—*(a laugh)*. There was the Landgrave's debt also, unless it could be supposed that he, like those creditors, contrary to law, would fly from payment, except it was clandestine—*(a laugh)*. It would surely have been much better for the commissioners, in the first instance, to have come to parliament for an additional grant, when the original sum was found insufficient, rather than strike off 10 per cent. indiscriminately. It could hardly be surprising that his Royal Highness should now wish to make amends for their inconsiderate deduction. He would hardly be suspected of having any interested view in supporting this motion; and certainly he would not be suspected by those who recollect the declaration he made at that time.—But he thought it a weak thing, after we had voted away 250,000,000*l.* for the support of the thrones of Europe, an object in which we failed, we should not give 100,000*l.* to maintain the dignity of our own, an object which we could not fail to accomplish.

Sir Robert Buxton moved the previous question, upon which the house divided; for the previous question 184; *against it* 139.

AUGUST 4.

DEFENCE AMENDMENT BILL.

Mr. SHERIDAN ridiculed the honorable gentleman's (Mr. Windham) sarcasm on the public prints, observing, that in compliment to his friend (Mr. Cobbett) he probably preferred the weekly to the diurnal publications. He praised the readiness, zeal, and alacrity of the volunteer corps, and remarked, that, with the exception of the regulars, there was not a corps in the kingdom on which the late secretary at war had not cast some degree of odium. He approved of this bill, because it encouraged volunteer exertions, and pointed out the station in which every man in the country ought to

place himself. It had been stated by the right honorable gentleman, with respect to the general defence bill, that its object ought to have been to march companies to the army, and that their first destination was to be that of filling up the regiments of the line. He had spoken to gentlemen upon that subject, who thought that a nobleman, gentleman, tradesman, or farmer, all of whom were liable to the operation of the act, if they did not volunteer, would be very much surprised to find themselves, perhaps in the course of a month, in a private regiment, and liable to be tied up to the halberts. It was impossible for any man to make a comparison between the volunteers and those who were drilled on compulsion. Could the latter be compared with those patriotic volunteers, who were sacrificing their time in perfecting themselves in their exercise? Look at the St. George's and the Westminster volunteers, who most likely might, at this moment, be seen exercising in the hall. But the honorable gentleman had said, he disliked, that superiority and spirit of aristocracy in towns and villages which it was the tendency of the bill to introduce. He denied that it would have any such effect. The only effect of the bill was that of allowing persons to volunteer instead of being compelled to serve. They were not obliged to wear an uniform. If in villages they voluntarily came forward without uniform, they were exempted from the operation of the general defence bill, In large towns such as Birmingham, Sheffield, and Nottingham, he should prefer associations of the higher classes, and in the country and villages those of the lower. He was satisfied with the power this bill gave His Majesty, with regard to the acceptance of volunteer services. We ought not to stop while any thing was left to be done. We should look forward to the possibility of the most disastrous calamities, and disgraceful events again occurring. The state of Ireland was

such, that although every man must rejoice at its present security, we ought not to calculate on its remaining free from disturbance. It was absolutely necessary that Ireland should not be separated from this country. It might, perhaps, be necessary that the whole of our disposable force should be employed for the purpose of retaining Ireland. Upon the whole, he saw no objections to the alterations proposed by this bill, but, on the contrary, thought it a proper extension of the system of volunteer service. *(Mr. Sheridan delivered his speech from the Treasury Bench.)*

Mr. Windham answered Mr. Sheridan.

Mr. Sheridan, in reply to the observations that he was a new convert, asked the honorable gentleman whether it was a new situation for him to come forward and state his opinion when the country was in danger? Did he call out like the honorable gentleman, "restore me and my friends to power, or the country cannot be saved?" Was it new to him to be an advocate in the cause of the country? The honorable gentleman had accused him of firing his musquet too soon; he had, however, returned the fire. He ought to apologise to His Majesty's ministers for the danger into which he had brought them; but happily the honorable gentleman had fired his musket, but had forgot to put ball in it. The honorable gentleman commanded a fine piece of artillery, which was formidable whenever he had recourse to it; but he was so fond of squibs and crackers, that he seldom did any execution. It was not long since the honorable gentleman had stated, that there was no spirit in the country, and that journals lagged in rousing its energies. Would he have had these bills brought in at that time? He had said, the people of England were a degraded, base, and lost people. Was that the time for bringing forward such a measure? No, it was more

likely to be attended with effect, by having been brought forward after the spirit of the people had been excited. With regard to that clattering and race-course bustle the honorable gentleman had described, he was glad to hear that noise of the machinery of the bill, but it was with regret he had heard the honorable gentleman speak of it with disgust and rebuke. The honorable gentleman had called the placards of the enemy paper bullets, and had said what a time for Buonaparte to come! It was to be hoped he would not come the sooner in consequence of what the honorable gentleman had said, but if he did, he would find that the measures adopted by ministers had already produced an army of one hundred thousand volunteers. The honorable gentleman regretted the measure had not been brought forward sooner, but he could have no substantial reason for his regret, except that he would have had three times so many opportunities of abusing ministers. His system had been a system of discouragement, which, if it had been followed, would have led the country to despair, and prostrate itself at the feet of its enemy. He had said, that there was no salvation for the country, except by a particular individual being minister; that the country had nothing to fight for; that after the disgraceful treaty of Amiens, the country had received, on the part of honour, kicks innumerable; that it had nothing like glory or honor for which to contend. This was one of his modes of discouragement. The next was to lay down by most laborious demonstration, that no irregular force could contend with the regular. That such a force as we had, was impossible to resist such a force as the enemy could bring against us. The next was, that nothing could be done for the country till the present ministers were out—that they were an incubus, a night-mare—and that the more that was given them, the worse they were. He then referred to what he described as

the honorable gentleman's silly panegyric upon Mr. Cobbett, and the erection of a statue of gold to his honor. *(Here Mr. Windham said something in a low tone of voice.)* Mr. Sheridan continued. The honorable gentleman, he said, seemed to mutter at this; nay, he groaned; he was glad to hear him groan. However, he hoped, he would go on with his statue of gold, and make a colossal statue; but he advised him not to solicit subscriptions at the Royal Exchange; it was not likely he would be very successful there; for, he believed, in one of that gentleman's papers, he had observed, that the stocks could not exist if the monarchy exist. It was not very probable that the writer of such a sentiment would be very popular in that wealthy city where any subscriptions could be raised with effect.

AUGUST 10.

VOLUNTEERS.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose to make his promised motion relative to the volunteers. He began by reminding the house that, when he first gave notice of the motion, he had stated his conviction that it was of a nature which could give rise to no opposition. In now rising to bring it forward, he was not less sanguine that it would be unanimously adopted. It was of a nature which he flattered himself would meet the approbation of every man in the house, however different his opinions on general subjects of policy.—*(At this time Mr. Windham and some of his friends entered the house.)* The honorable member, with peculiar good humor, alluded to the circumstance; and however difficult he thought the task, he was not without hope that even these honorable members would give their assent to the motion. He trusted that whatever zeal of opposition had been manifested on other occasions,

there might, at least, be one cordial day before their separation—one day in which every consideration was lost sight of but devotion to the cause of our common country. It might perhaps be thought by some persons that the motion which he was now about to submit to the house would have come with more propriety from one in an ostensible situation, from a member of His Majesty's executive government. In bringing forward the motion, he certainly had no wish to interfere with what more strictly was the duty of the servants of the crown, but he could not but think that a motion such as he had to propose was one which came with peculiar propriety from an individual who appeared in that house as a volunteer in the cause of his country. It might not possess equal authority, but he was sure it would not be inferior in honesty and sincerity. In the few words which he had to offer before he submitted the motion to the consideration of the house, he should carefully abstain from every topic on which a diversity of opinion might arise, conscious as he was that some gentlemen (looking to the bench on which Mr. Windham and his friends were seated) were never backward in availing themselves of opportunities for starting grounds of opposition. Before he proceeded further, he wished it to be distinctly understood that his motion was intended to include every description of individuals whose services were voluntarily offered at this difficult and trying crisis. It would include volunteer corps, corps of yeomanry, and corps wich were raised by patriotic gentlemen, and accepted by government. He thought it necessary thus far to explain the object of his motion, to prevent any misconstruction or misapprehension from whatever quarter it might proceed. There were one or two points on which, before he handed the motion to the chair, he wished to say a very few words. At present there existed some degree of doubt respecting the proper construction of the clauses of the bill for the general de-

fence of the country; and also of the bill by which some ambiguities were meant to be removed. It was not sufficiently understood how far a voluntary offer to enter into a corps, previously accepted by His Majesty, would exempt the individuals making this offer from the compulsory operations of the bills to which he had just now referred. He thought it the more necessary to call the attention of the house to this subject, in consequence of a circular letter from a noble secretary of state (Lord Hobart), in which it appeared to him that the noble lord had, to a certain degree, put a false construction on the act. After such an authority as this had been published, it was essential that the public at large should have a thorough conception of the meaning of the legislature. He stated, from communications on which he could place the greatest reliance, that in Hampshire particularly, the greatest embarrassment prevailed. If the interpretation of the noble lord was to be considered as decisive, then a power would be left to the constables of the different districts, to call on individuals to comply with the compulsory clause of the act, after they had entered into a voluntary corps, whose services had been regularly accepted by his Majesty's ministers. Nothing, however, could be more clear than this, that such was not the view of the legislature. It was the clear spirit of the act, and he was anxious that it should be unequivocally understood, that when any individual entered into a corps of the nature which he had described, he was henceforth freed from the operation of all the compulsory clauses of the act. The next point on which he wished to make a few observations, was the mode in which many volunteer associations conducted their clothing. He was well aware, and it could not have escaped the notice of many other gentlemen, that many thousand individuals whose loyalty was undoubted, whose ardor to come forward in the sacred cause in which we are now engaged is indisputable, were prevented from

entering into volunteer associations, from the heavy expense to which a gaudy fashionable dress, calculated merely to gratify the silly vanity of some persons who were too opulent to feel the pressure, would expose them. They had every wish to appear in the ranks of their fellow-countrymen, in defence of their sovereign and their country, but they could not, without the greatest inconvenience to their families, incur the expense which such dresses necessarily incurred. If the clothing were more cheap, he was sure that thousands, whom no consideration but that which he had mentioned now deterred, would flock to the standard of loyalty. He could but think that gentlemen in affluent circumstances, and who had no reason to think of the expense in the choice of a dress, would do themselves infinite honor by appearing in the plainest dress possible. No man was surely, at a period like this, when the greatest virtues were called forth, to pride himself in the ranks of a volunteer association on the richness and costliness of his dress. We were not to turn our attention to external decorations, but to place our confidence in the heart which they covered. It was not idle pomp or tawdry magnificence which was to entitle members of a volunteer association to the confidence of their country. In this great and trying crisis, we were to look for salvation to fortitude, to heroism, to contempt of death. *(This part of the speech was loudly applauded from all parts of the house.)* Passing from this point, the honorable gentleman next adverted to another subject, on which he insisted with a good deal of energy. He was glad to see that the spirit of the country was now roused, but he wished that this spirit should manifest itself by unequivocal signs. He rejoiced to find that a military disposition pervaded the land, and he wished that the effect of this military disposition might be visible in a general military appearance in the country. In Ireland, when the system of volunteers, carried to an

extraordinary pitch, left a greater proportion of the regular troops disposable for foreign service, every man, in every part of the country, was to be seen in his uniform. When he said this, he believed he spoke in the hearing of some gentlemen who had witnessed the scene, and the impression which it produced. At that period, every man in the Irish house of commons appeared in the dress of his appropriate association. It might not, perhaps, be regular in him to allude to the gallery of that house; but he might just say, that the gallery exhibited an equal military appearance. The public officers of state imitated the example, and even the grave Judges on the bench were unwilling to call a counsel, unless under his professional gown he exhibited a uniform. He could not but think that the adoption of a similar practice now, would be productive of the most beneficial effects in keeping alive that ardor which, fortunately for the country, had now began to kindle in every loyal heart. Even if it had no other effect, but to point out those who were lukewarm and disaffected at this moment, when the loyalty of all was put to the test, he thought that it might be productive of infinite advantage. As to the space where volunteer associations were to be trained, he begged leave to offer a very few words. It was his opinion, that the places allotted for this purpose should, in the first instance, be as secluded as possible. Till a certain degree of progress was made in discipline, it was in every point of view desirable to be separated from the observation of a promiscuous multitude. He needed not to remind the house, that there were many individuals to whom, under such circumstances, the stare of a vulgar multitude would produce the most unpleasant sensations. There were men who would much more cheerfully expose themselves to the shot of the enemy than encounter the derision of motley spectators. He was at all times happy to hear of any facilities being given for this separate exercise. He

mentioned, to the honor of his Grâce the Duke of Portland, that he had given up the space before his house for the use of a volunteer association. There was another place, called, he believed, Lord's Cricket Ground, hired for a similar purpose at an enormous expense, and at the same time unattended with the advantages of privacy. He was informed that the owners of this place, after exacting this inordinate price, were in the habit of admitting boys and other idle spectators, at the rate of sixpence. He felt indignant at such unjust and exorbitant extortion, and he did not think that government would be stepping beyond the bounds of their just authority, if they insisted on the proprietors of such grounds giving them up for the use of volunteer associations on receiving a fair and reasonable compensation. These were the general points to which he wished to call the attention of the house. Before he sat down, he begged leave to advert to some other considerations connected, though not in so intimate a manner, with the subject immediately before the house. No man had seen with greater pleasure than he had, the noble, patriotic, generous donations of which the gentlemen at Lloyd's coffee-house had set so illustrious an example in the city. He confessed that, liberal as the subscription already was, it was with surprise that he still observed the absence of several classes of the community which he expected to have seen the first on the list. He had no wish to say any thing harsh respecting the noble and honorable persons of whom those classes were composed. Though they had not yet come forward with their contributions, he had no doubt that they would not be deficient in devotion to their country at this trying moment; and that, though they had not taken the lead, they would not shew themselves deficient in generosity in so sacred a cause. When he looked to the amount of the fund at this moment, and when he considered how much greater it might eventually become by the

contributions of those classes to which he had referred, much as he admired the object to which it was originally appropriated, he could not help thinking that it might admit of a more extended application. Though originally designed solely for the humane and generous purpose of affording aid to the wives, to the orphans, and the relatives of those who perished while fighting their country's battles, it did appear to him, that so large a fund, instead of remaining now unapplied, might, to a certain extent, be employed in contributing to the direct service of the country. Rewards might be offered to those who were now willing to volunteer the performance of important national services, and who might be deterred merely by the consideration, that in their absence their families would remain without a provision. He did not mean to press this subject further at present, but thought it his duty to throw out these hints for the consideration of those to whom was committed the management and appropriation of the fund. He would, he hoped, be forgiven if he alluded to another source of assistance, the beneficial effects of which had been so liberally experienced during the last war. He meant to allude to the patriotic contributions of our fair country-women. In such a contest as this in which we were now engaged, involving the preservation of all the charities and all the endearments of domestic life, he could not allow himself to believe, that they would be backward in the display of their patriotism. To their other charms he was confident they would add the charm of love to their country and their homes. The honorable gentleman having gone through these topics, proceeded to advert to the description of the force, to the individuals composing which his vote of thanks would be addressed. On this part of the subject he had no sort of desire to enter into any military details. He was no military man, and professed no power to give the house information on the subject. In the course of many discussions

which had lately taken place, it had, however, frequently occurred to him, that many of these details might have been very well spared, whether proceeding from military or unmilitary members of the house. He must, in the face of authorities deservedly high in a military point of view, be permitted to say that, as a constitutional member of parliament, he thought the force which was now formed for the defence of the country, one in which he felt himself fully warranted in placing the amplest confidence. Military men were too apt to view every object with what they were pleased to call a military eye; but with all their minuteness of observation they were very apt to overlook one little fortress, which he should never cease to think of the highest importance, and that was the fortress of the constitution. If he were asked, whether he did not think a hundred thousand regular troops a more effectual body for the defence of the country than an equal number of militia, volunteers, and yeomanry, he certainly could have no difficulty in giving his answer. Undoubtedly, for every military purpose, such a regular force was superior. He would maintain, however, that in addition to a regular army of a certain magnitude, a force, consisting of militia, volunteers, and yeomanry, was a force more suited to the habits, to the circumstances, to the constitutional liberties of this country. In saying this he did not speak of an army for the purpose of carrying on a continental war, but a force such as it behoved us to keep up when the necessity of cultivating military habits was more imperiously imposed on us by the ambition and the malignity of a foreign enemy, whom nothing could satisfy short of our destruction. He liked the force the better, because it was of a diversified character. In the first instance the preference was given to the regular troops; the militia, the volunteer corps, and the yeomanry succeeded in their claims to distinction. There was in such a force a connection which

must ever make it formidable to a foreign enemy. There was in its composition a facility for separation, which, in a constitutional view, he should always regard with satisfaction. Great standing armies, however disciplined and powerful, were not to be implicitly trusted. He might refer to numerous examples in proof of this position. A most striking instance occurred in the army of France. Never was there an army better disciplined, more brave, or apparently more dependent on the throne; but that very army thus constituted, and on which every possible reliance was placed, in the course of a very few hours suffered the monarchy to be overturned, and the revolution to triumph. In making this allusion, it was the farthest in the world from his intention to impeach the loyalty of our regular army. On the contrary, he believed that no body of men were ever animated with truer or more affectionate attachment to their sovereign. He admired, however, the present constitution of our military force, as being exempted from the inconveniencies and the evils which attached to a certain degree to all standing, exclusive, permanent armies. By such a constitution, the strength and efficiency of the whole was confirmed and consolidated. He liked the present attitude of the country, whether we looked forward to the continuance of war, or to the conclusion of peace. On the subject of peace he should just say one word. He should be the ready advocate of peace, if it could be obtained on terms consistent with the national honor and safety. This, however, he would distinctly say, and he was sure that he spoke the language of His Majesty's ministers when he made the declaration, that no peace could be formed, no negociation could be listened to, no offer for negociation could be accepted, while there was a hostile army in any part of the united empire. If he had supposed it possible for ministers to have entertained contrary sentiments, he should have felt it his duty to have brought forward

a distinct proposition, that the minister who should listen to so disgraceful a proposition, would deserve to be impeached, and to lose his head as the punishment of his infamy. He stated it distinctly, therefore, as what he conceived was the unalterable resolution of ministers, that no proposal for peace should be entertained, while a single French soldier had a footing on British ground. *(This sentiment was universally applauded.)* The honorable gentleman, after this patriotic effusion, went on to recommend unanimity on this interesting occasion. He did not call on gentlemen to give up their opinions. He did not wish by any means to dictate to them the course of political conduct which they were to pursue. Within the walls of that house every man had a fair right fully and unequivocally to declare his opinion on public affairs. He might be permitted, however, to entreat of gentlemen, that as the period of their separation was now at hand, they would not utter such sentiments out of doors; that they would not resort to any measures which could damp the increasing ardor and energy of the country; that they would not lend the sanction of their names to sentiments which, coming from unauthorised sources, had never been received with any portion of favor. All that he asked of them was, to suspend their political animosities for a moment; not to represent the servants of the crown as weak and inefficient, at a moment when confidence in their exertions was so necessary to the salvation of the country; not to waste that time, and those talents in party spirit and intrigue, which might be so much more worthily employed in performing the sublime and animated duties of patriotism. This was a moment which called on every honest man to unite heart and hand in support of all that is dear to us as a great and free people, against the greatest danger with which we were ever threatened. It was not, surely, asking too much of honorable gentlemen, to ask them, during the short recess of parliament, to

suspend all pursuits, to relinquish all pursuits of secondary importance, and to think only of the great cause which interested all minds, and attracted all hearts. Surely their party spirit was not so violent, their hostility to ministers was not so virulent as at all to come in competition with the great object of saving the country, which they uniformly declared was the first object of their regard. In that short interval, properly employed, much important service might be rendered to the country. Much might be done in giving a proper direction to that spirit of patriotism which now fortunately pervaded every part of the empire. Let but this small sacrifice be made to patriotism, and when they once more assembled in that house, they might again resume their favorite pursuits, under the pleasing consciousness, that they had contributed their efforts to the general safety, that the patriotism of the people at large had at length secured us against enemies, however malignant, and dangers however formidable. The honorable gentleman, in conclusion, declined occupying the time of the house, by any arguments in support of his motion. The zeal, the fortitude, the promptitude, with which the volunteer associations had obeyed the call of their country in the hour of her danger, could never be sufficiently admired. He would not expatiate on their conduct, he would leave it without comment to the honest unbiassed feelings of the house. He then moved,

"That the thanks of this house be given to the volunteer and yeomanry corps, for the zeal and promptitude with which they associated for the defence of the country, in this important and dangerous crisis."

He also moved—

"That a return of the volunteer corps be laid before the house, in order that they may be handed down to posterity, by being entered on the journals."

Gen. Gascoyne seconded the motion. A debate ensued.

Mr. Sheridan rose to reply, and spoke in nearly the following terms:—By the courtesey of this house, any member who brings forward a motion is allowed the right of replying to any arguments which may be offered against it; but of this right I should not on this occasion avail myself, if it were not for the very direct personal allusions which have been made to me in the course of the debate. I confess that I feel great surprise, that the appeal I have thought it my duty to make to the house, for a vote of thanks to those gallant men who have stood forward so gallantly in defence of all that is dear to us, should have provoked a dissentient voice, or produced a discussion of such length—now not less than five or six hours. This hesitation was not less surprising than impolitic; but the conduct of the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Windham) did not by any means surprise me. That the man who required twenty-four hours to consider of the propriety of putting down rebellion in Ireland, should waste five or six hours in investigating the policy of declaring our gratitude and admiration of the loyalty and exertions of those who stood forward to protect their country in the time of peril, was perfectly consistent; that he should have been seconded, however, by the gallant officer behind him, was rather a matter of astonishment. But before I proceed to remark on the observations of both those gentlemen, I must take notice of the appeal which has been made to me by an honorable friend of mine, namely, whether, before I consented to give my support to ministers, I had obtained satisfaction from them upon two points, and made those the conditions of my support; first, as to the appointment of a council of war which I supported the other night, upon the motion of another honorable friend of mine. With regard to this measure I confess that, though on the occasion I have alluded, I strongly advised its adoption; I have since then, in consequence of information I received from the very highest authority, had

my opinion very materially shaken, if not altogether removed; for from this authority I have heard such arguments as completely satisfied my mind that the establishment of this commission would be attended not only with disadvantage, but seriously injurious; I therefore am ready very fully and frankly to declare that the sentiments I held upon this subject were erroneous.

The other point to which my honorable friend referred, but not quite in the friendly tone to which he has been in the habit of addressing himself to me, was with respect to the offer of service from his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. That, however, is a subject of delicacy into the discussion of which I shall not enter. I believe there is no man who knows me will doubt for an instant the respect, attachment, and veneration I entertain for the virtues and public spirit of that illustrious personage; but I am not to be tutored or schooled by any man as to the way in which I should manifest my feelings and discharge my duty towards his Royal Highness. I am not to be told, that unless the offer, which has done him the highest honor, shall be treated in a manner satisfactory to my honorable friend and me, I shall decline to support His Majesty's government on this trying occasion. Of my respect and regard for his Royal Highness as a Prince, and as a man, I should think my honorable friend himself fully aware. It is not necessary for me to make any parade or profession of my zealous wishes for his interest or character. It is justly due to that character, to state that which must constitute its highest praise, that he has offered, in the noblest manner, to stand forward for the nation's defence; and I am fully persuaded that that offer was not less graciously received by the persons to whom it was made, than it is felt with gratitude by the country at large. I am, however, confident, that whatever might have been the effect of that offer, his Royal Highness would not be friendly to

any observations calculated to excite public discontent, or to disturb public unanimity; on the contrary, I am fully persuaded, that, according to the sentiment of his dignified friend, Lord Moira, his Royal Highness would rather enter as a private in the ranks of his armed countrymen, than countenance any discussion which could tend to divide the feelings of the people. With respect to the remarks of the honorable officer, upon the manner in which military lectures are received in this house, I must set the honorable gentleman right, if he alluded to me. I beg him to understand that I never did say that this house was not a proper place for military men to state their opinions; but I did say this, that as a member of parliament I would not abandon my opinion in compliment to the assertions of military authority, for which, generally speaking, I profess not to entertain a very profound respect, at least so far as it is displayed in this house; and indeed it would be rather surprising, if from the manner pursued such authority should be much respected. I can collect no information from it. One officer rises and lays down a certain plan, another proposes one of quite a different nature, but neither follows up his ideas. There is a kind of confusion and irregularity in their movements. They do not march close upon each other with the *lock step*, but they run about and scramble in such a way as to be scarcely intelligible, and when intelligible, of very little use, and not at all tending to elucidate the subject, or to enlighten the house. The honorable officer to whom I refer tells, to be sure, some military anecdotes, with which any man that has read some very well known books, cannot be unacquainted; and another honorable officer at times entertains us in the same way. But of what value to the house is the repetition of those matters of fact? If these gallant officers can tell us nothing more than what can be seen in Plutarch's Lives, Cæsar's Commentaries, or Vaughan; or how such a division moved at

Malplaquet or Blenheim, they can render very little service to the country. Indeed, for the credit of these officers themselves, I deprecate such discussions, and would advise them to abstain from such statements. But, as to the motion before the house, the honororable Colonel asks, why thank the volunteers for merely doing their duty? His new acquaintance and right honorable friend below him ought, however, to be the last to oppose a motion of thanks to them for doing their duty; he who has been so long and so loudly lamenting the base spirit which, according to his description, existed in the country, in consequence of the treaty of Amiens and the character of the present ministers. If the right honorable gentleman did really wish to remove that lowness of mind which he so often deplored, his language this night was strange indeed; but if he regretted to find his opinion mistaken, it is of course quite consistent to resist the expression of our gratitude to the band of patriots who have broken through that slumber of apathy, and shook off that shade of despondency which he has so frequently pictured to the house, but which in reality never existed. The honorable Colonel has described the motives which ought to actuate the people of this country to take up arms at present, and he contends that their having obeyed these motives, namely, the defence of their own families and the call of public duty, does not entitle them to the gratitude of parliament. I regret that the honorable Colonel has, in the course of his observations, entered into any contrast between the volunteers and any other description of the public force. Such comparisons are invidious at any time, and particularly imprudent at present; I can see no good purpose it can answer. Although the wisdom of the honorable Colonel's right honorable friend (Mr. W.) has given the sanction of his authority to the practice, I did flatter myself that in the observations with which I prefaced this motion I had abstained from every topic that was likely to

provoke debate or dissension, and that was my wish. I declined to say one word as to the conduct of ministers, because I knew, from the experience of a former evening, that any thing from me in commendation of ministers would be a pretext to the right honorable gentleman to fall foul of them. Recurring to the comparison of the honorable Colonel between the volunteers and the regulars, I cannot help saying that he has not taken a course very likely to reflect honor on his favorite force. The honorable Colonel has admitted that the volunteers have done their duty, but that they are not on that account entitled to the proposed vote, while the distinguished services of the regular army are overlooked. In proof of their services, however, the honorable Colonel states this, that at the time of the mutiny in the fleet, the jacobins sent circulars to the several regiments of the army, inviting them to mutiny, which invitations they refused to comply with. Then the honorable gentleman's argument stands thus, that we should refuse our thanks to the volunteers, whose merit is that they have done their duty, but that we should grant this honor to the regular army, whose merit is, according to his statement, that they rejected a proposition to mutiny; that they declined to violate their oaths—to abandon every sense of duty and honor. Such is the substance of the panegyric which this regular Colonel has pronounced upon the regular army. If he can say nothing more in their favor, I think the army would be much obliged to him to withhold his praise. The honorable Colonel has, in his compliments to his right honorable friend, thought proper to say that it would be for my interest to preserve my hands as clean from the imputation of unworthy motives in my opposition to ministers as his right honorable friend has done and continues to do. If the honorable Colonel has been acquainted with the views and proceedings of the old opposition, he would have declined that remark: but I will refer him for in-

formation upon this point to his right honorable friend, and I would call with confidence upon that right honorable gentleman myself to state the course which the old opposition took when he acted with them. Were not the grounds upon which they rested their conduct materially different from those upon which he and his colleagues now act? When they condemned ministers they pointed at the particular acts which justified that condemnation.—They never pronounced loose and general censures. They never told the country that the ministers they opposed were not entitled to confidence without proving it; but the right hon. gentleman never does meet the ministers fairly, never opposes them front to front; his mode of discipline seems best to qualify him for squibs and skirmishes; his favorite plan of attack is on the flanks and rear of his adversary. Is this the system of tactics which the honorable Colonel could approve? I would call upon the right honorable gentleman to make his approaches more manfully. If he would consult the precedent of the old opposition, he would alter his present course for one better adapted to recommend himself to the favor of the country and the deference of parliament. I am glad, however, to perceive from the reference he has made to the old opposition, that he is refreshing his arms, no doubt from an expectation, in which I hope he will not be disappointed, that he will have to stand a very long campaign in opposition. If in this campaign he will endeavor to imitate the party I have alluded to, he will protect himself and his friends from the charge of faction; he will not oppose measures because they come from a certain set of men, and although the same measures from other men would meet his most cordial concurrence; he will not act upon such motives, and if not, his opinion and opposition will become respectable, and may have some pretension to a comparison with the old opposition, from which the right honorable gentleman may, perhaps, think

I have now a furlough; but, as to the comparison of the two oppositions under the present circumstances, it strikes me that the old opposition might address that of the right honorable gentleman in the same terms as those used by the landlord who kept the sign of the Two Magpies at Hounslow, in his dispute with another landlord who thought proper to put up the same sign—"We are the real old magpies, and you have set up your new opposition through spite." [*A general laugh.*] The honorable Colonel, in his affection and deference for the Prince of Wales, recommended that his Royal Highness should be appointed to the command of the *levy en masse*, as a place suited to his rank and consequence. I would beg the house to recollect that this is the army which the honorable Officer advised ministers to distribute into scouring parties, or to stay in their respective districts, to keep up a kind of irregular attack upon the enemy—to fire from behind hedges or walls—from out of houses, &c. Now mark the station the honorable Colonel would assign the illustrious personage I have mentioned—he would send his Royal Highness to take his place behind a tree, to watch and direct flying shooters, to conduct a mode of warfare that would resemble something like bear hunting. This is a part which I hope will never be assigned to the Prince of Wales; that we shall not call on him to stand behind a tree, or throw himself into a ditch when the enemy approaches. An honorable friend of mine has stated in the course of his objections to the motion before the house, that while the volunteers were drilling, they were laughed at by idle, worthless spectators. This appears to me to be a very strong reason in favor of this motion; for if the volunteers are laughed at by the profligate, let them have this honorable mark of your approbation to gratify their pride; to raise them above such sneers. The late Secretary at War has maintained in the course of this debate, and on other occasions, that our situation

was by no means so dangerous at any period of the late war, as it is at present. To this assertion the noble Secretary of State has so ably answered, that I think it unnecessary to say much, but I insist that the perils of the country in the year 1798, were much superior to those by which we are now menaced; for at that time Ireland was actually invaded; a formidable insurrection prevailed; and had the whole of the French force which was sent to Ireland been able to effect a landing, or rather, perhaps, were it not for the treachery of Hoche, that country would have been subdued. Then I contend that Ireland was saved by an accident; and if the 40,000 men which were permitted to go to Egypt had bent their course to Ireland, what, I would ask, could have been the fate of that country? In such a state of things, I maintain that ministers are justified in charging the right honorable gentleman with neglecting to resort to such measures of vigor as he ought to have employed, and such as have been on the present occasion adopted. The right honorable gentleman will not deny that he felt the extremity of panic at the state of the nation in 1798, insomuch that he was heard to complain of the apathy of his colleagues; that they were not forward to adopt measures sufficiently suited to the crisis. They were, to be sure, persuaded to propose a bill, which was passed, in the preamble of which the alarming state of the country was acknowledged, and several military preparations prescribed; which, however, were never executed, nor was the act, in any of its provisions, acted upon; but yet it was remarkable, that though clumsy and ineffectual, it contained the same principle and nearly the same clauses, which the right honorable gentleman has objected to in the act for raising the mass of the people. Why did the right honorable gentleman approve of a proposition then which he abuses now. There are indeed many other measures of the late ministry which the right honor-

able gentleman professes to condemn. He has said, among others, that the provisional cavalry was a foolish measure—how then can he account for the support he gave it as a minister? I do appeal to him, or any other man who has a spark of frankness, whether such conduct is excusable! that of a right honorable gentleman, who lays claim to a character of candor, sincerity, openness, and independence of mind, who continued in this house to plead for proceedings, of which, as a cabinet minister, he strongly disapproved, was certainly not quite consistent. The honorable Colonel says, that Austria was not sincerely desirous to preserve the peace of Campo Formio. I remember when we stated the same thing in this house we were opposed by the late Secretary at War and his friends, and the fact was positively denied. The Ex-Secretary at War considered the assertion mere nonsense—indeed, that right honorable gentleman, whether in or out of office, has always been in the habit of treating the assertions or arguments of his adversaries, with an appearance of indifference, if not contempt, that was not becoming in any man. No doubt, if great talents would justify a man in looking down upon the arguments of his adversary, the honorable gentleman was fully qualified to do so—but no degree or description of talents could excuse such conduct. The argument of every man is, if at all attended to, entitled to respectful attention. With regard to the conduct of the right honorable gentleman since he became an ex-minister, I do contend, that its uniform tenor has been to invite and encourage the enemy, and to depress and discourage our own people. He has invited the enemy to provoke the war, by the description he always gave of the character of ministers—and since the war he has invited an attack upon our country, by the statements he has made of the situation of the public mind, the disorganized state of our army, and the awkward manner in which

our defensive force was to be constructed. By this kind of invitation he has brought Buonaparte into a scrape, and he certainly is in a much worse scrape than this country; all his misfortunes may be attributed to the reliance he placed on the words of the right honorable gentleman, when he reported the ministers to be a set of shabby, pusillanimous, incapable fellows, who knew nothing, who would bear any thing, who would submit to any injury, or endure any insult. In short, that the peace of Amiens was a curse, and that, bad as the ministers were, this treaty had rendered the people still worse. He always stated that ministers were only anxious for the safe tenure of their places, and that as there was nothing high-minded about them, they would make any sacrifice to that object. What was the natural tendency of such language? What impression was it likely to make on the mind of Buonaparte? If he were told that it was always rant, the mere heated declamation of a discontented ex-minister, he would, no doubt, answer No—impossible! Mr. Windham is a discreet statesman, and he knows the character of the English government, and of the English people, well; no man better. But Buonaparte was deceived, and was suffering much regret for his confidence in the right honorable gentleman. He knows now that ministers are not quite so passive or so timid as the right honorable gentleman would lead him to imagine; that they would go to war sooner than sacrifice the honor and interests of the country. There is a character in our great bard, Sir Andrew Agueeheek, to whom, though I cannot entirely compare the First Consul, I have no doubt that if he were to declare his sentiments on his present situation, he would say, in the language of the old Knight,—"*If I thought he'd been so valiant, I'd be damned ere I had challenged him.*"

I am pretty certain that such is now the feeling of Buonaparte, and he has to thank the right honor-

able gentleman for reducing him to that dilemma. I hope that ministers will place him in a still worse dilemma; if duly seconded by the people, upon which I confidently rely, I have no doubt that it is in their power to do so. In reply to the observations that have been made on the motion under consideration, on the ground that it is not necessary, I shall only say that it must be useful; that it is dictated by justice and policy, and called for by the irresistible voice of gratitude; that the merit it is intended to distinguish is great and material to the public safety; and that to record such merit would excite the emulation of the people at large, if a stimulus were necessary, while it would form a monument honorable to our own character, grateful to the pride, and conducive, by the influence of example, to the best interests of posterity. The honorable gentleman concluded with submitting his motion for thanks, &c.

Colonel Crauford made a few observations in reply, which was merely explanatory of his speech.

The question was then put upon Mr. Sheridan's motion, and carried nem. con.

Mr. Sheridan next moved, "That the Speaker do signify to the lords lieutenants of counties, &c. the assent of the house to the above resolution."

Agreed to nem. con.

Mr. Sheridan finally moved, "That a return be made and entered upon the Journals, of the names and number of the volunteer corps, who, from the present moment till the next meeting of parliament, should enrol themselves and be accepted by His Majesty, in order that their patriotic example may be handed down to animate our latest posterity."

Agreed to nem. con.

MARCH 15, 1804.

STATE OF THE NAVAL DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY.

Mr. Pitt moved for an address to His Majesty, "Praying, that he will be pleased to give orders for laying before the house, an amount of all the ships of the line, fifty gun ships, frigates, sloops, gun brigs, and other vessels actually in commission in the years ending the 31st of December, 1793, 1801, and 1803.

Mr. SHERIDAN.—It was my intention, Sir, to wait until I should hear the opinions of professional men on this subject, but the observations which have been made by the honorable member (Mr. Wilberforce) who has just sat down, urge me to obtrude myself on your notice thus prematurely, and contrary to my original intention. The honorable gentleman has, in my mind, used observations the most unwarrantable on parliamentary grounds I have ever heard in this house. He has stated, that he has never had conversation with any naval officer whose opinion has not been decidedly in contradiction to the system upon which the naval affairs of the country have been for some time back conducted; that is to say, since the gallant admiral, who now presides at the head of the Admiralty Board, was appointed to that high station; and this information so obtained, he offers to the house as justification for the censure which the advocates for the motion before the house would attach to the character of the noble lord at the head of the Admiralty. The honorable gentleman ventures to tell the house, that upon grounds such as these, there is a sufficient reason for the inquiry, and for granting the papers required; but from whom has the honorable gentleman obtained the intelligence, and heard the sentiments to which he thinks the house ought to attach so much importance? From officers, no doubt, who are ashore and unemployed; from those who have not the best opportunity of judging, and whose judgment for many reasons is not entitled to the first

attention: but not from such officers as those whom the house has heard this night; not from such as the gallant admiral who preceded the honorable gentleman to whom I am now alluding, and who has attracted my notice by statements which I am inclined to think he has collected from persons such as I have described, from those whose accounts of the condition of the navy naturally receive a colouring from their own situation. Thus the honorable gentleman would persuade us to sound our verdict on an occasion so important as that now before us, upon evidence drawn from such sources, upon second-hand assertions, in a word upon mere hearsay. The honorable gentleman is no doubt a conscientious man, he certainly so considers and describes himself, and we cannot give him any credit at all if we do not believe him to be so; and would appeal to his conscientiousness whether he does think that any court of justice, and this house is now called upon to act in that capacity, would pronounce sentence in any case upon evidence of the nature of that upon which he seems to rely? I say that there is no court that would attend to, much less believe such assertions. If the honorable gentleman has any charge to urge against the noble Lord against whom the motion before the house appears to be pointed, I say, let the evidence be brought forward; but do not let accusations be insinuated abroad, unsupported by any witnesses whatever, unjustified by any fact, and excused only by a loose statement that such and such officers, whom no one ventures to name, are much in the habit of speaking ill of the conduct of the Admiralty, and of the character of its principal director. The honorable gentleman, however, has told us, that he entertains a very sincere respect for this noble lord, and really here I must remark, that I never heard of any public character for whom men are more forward to profess respect, nor one that is so much respected, and yet so much aspersed. The grounds of the respect are,

however, notorious, while those of the aspersion are not even pretended to rest upon any thing more than hearsay evidence, which is surely not sufficient to induce this house to acquiesce in a motion that has no other object in view, than to convey an imputation upon one of the most gallant and meritorious characters this country has ever produced. For such a purpose I will never give my vote. I will not therefore consent to the grant of a single slip of paper, however plausible the pretence for demanding it, that may lead to an inquiry for which there exists no necessity whatever; to enter into which would imply a suspicion for which there is not the shadow of excuse, and import an accusation for which there is not the slightest ground. I would ask the right honorable gentleman mover of this proposition, what are the reasons, for he certainly has not stated any, which have provoked him to alter his sentiments with respect to the noble lord who was the subject of such warm panegyric, upon the first accession of the present ministers to office? and who, I would be curious to know, does the right honorable gentleman think more adequate to the high station he fills; whom would he recommend to succeed him? If the right honorable gentleman did pronounce the splendid panegyric to which I have alluded upon this noble lord, upon light grounds, he was certainly very censurable, for he was, as it were, giving a false character, and that of a great public servant; but it was well known that those grounds were not light—they rested upon the highest public services, and were supported by the warm and unanimous applauses of the country. Why then has the right honorable gentleman, and the honorable gentleman who spoke last, changed their opinions? Why have they altered their sentiments of the noble lord? Has any thing occurred since to induce or justify the change? I challenge them to take the most minute retrospect of the conduct of that noble lord since his appointment to the

presidency of the Admiralty: I call upon them to retrace all his steps, and to point out one reason why he has forfeited their confidence; I mean such a reason as this house would recognise as sufficient to justify the proposed inquiry. What facts have they in their power to produce? I am satisfied they have none, and therefore I will resist the proposition; and this is the first instance in which it has happened that I have felt it my duty to oppose a motion for inquiry. Indeed, on every such motion heretofore that I recollect, particularly during the administration of the right honorable gentleman by whom the present motion was submitted to the house, ample grounds were laid to demand inquiry; but in this instance I am of opinion that the demand is unsupported, not merely by common sense, but common decency. I do not intend to attribute improper motives to the right honorable mover; but I beg to ask him, what good can he accomplish by the production of papers respecting the state of our navy in a former war? What are his views? Does he mean to institute a comparison between Lord St. Vincent and Lord Spencer; to ascertain which of the two is better qualified to manage our naval concerns? I cannot see the purpose of such a contrast. It cannot tend to any good object. Indeed I am confident that if a stranger were to observe the whole of this proceeding, he would not hesitate to pronounce that it could be only actuated by factious and party motives. This I am the more strongly inclined to believe from the statements of the gallant officer (Sir Edward Pellew), which were quite a satisfactory reply to all the arguments that have been advanced this evening, and a full refutation of the calumnies that have been for some time back propagated relative to the condition of our navy. In that speech, which applied as forcibly to the heart as the understanding, the honorable baronet manifested not only that sincerity and frankness which is the general characteristic of the profession of

which he forms so bright an ornament, and which never fails to interest any man capable of feeling, but also a considerable share of acuteness and judgment: he made some very pertinent remarks upon the nature of those gun-boats which seem to be such favorites of the right honorable gentleman who brought forward this motion, but of which the honorable baronet don't appear at all to approve; and, from my own observation, I certainly am disposed to agree with the honorable baronet, who is much more competent to judge upon the subject than the right honorable gentleman or any other statesman. I am not surprised that these gun-boats should be treated with so much contempt by naval men. I have happened to see something of them myself, by accident, in the course of the last war, on the South coast, and they really appeared to me to be quite unfit to render any material service in the way of attack or defence; indeed some of them were incapable of firing a shot. It is known that out of the 120 gun-boats which the right honorable gentleman had in commission at the close of the last war, there were scarcely any retained as at all useful, and that sixty-two of them, which were purchased from contractors, were much the worst. Enough has been said by the honorable baronet of the kind of vessels which contractors generally built: and without referring to the ships of the line of which the honorable baronet has taken notice, in proof of the badness of their materials, and the inferiority of their workmanship, I shall only remark on these gun-boats. I do not, indeed, like to dwell on the misconduct of inferior officers in any department. I do not wish to hear of such persons in this house; we should always look to the heads of those departments as the persons answerable to us. The Navy Board may be suspected of having played into the hands of the contractors during the last war; and perhaps, to that was owing the great inferiority of the right honorable gentleman's gun-

boats—an inferiority which was certainly very glaring, for out of the hundred and twenty, eighty-seven were sold, after advertisement, for almost nothing; some which could not be disposed of were retained, and six were sent to Jersey, which were found so utterly useless, that Captain D'Auvergne knew not what to do with them. He, however, sent five of them home some time after, and was obliged to send some of his best cruisers to tow them safely. Yet this is the kind of force which the right honorable gentleman would recommend in preference to any other to defend our coast. It reminds me of an anecdote of the right honorable gentleman's administration, when three men of war were sent to this country from Portugal, which was our ally; those ships were found to be incapable of giving us any assistance; but on the contrary, were so little seaworthy, that it was determined to send them home, and it became absolutely necessary to dispatch one of our frigates with them as a convoy. Such shipping would of course be rather an incumbrance to us; and the gun-boats, to which the right honorable gentleman is so partial, would, from all that I have heard abroad, which is corroborated by the honorable baronet this night, be rather injurious on the score of expense, and the number of men they would necessarily require, than likely to be serviceable. An honorable admiral on the lower bench (Admiral Berkeley) has, in the course of a very extraordinary speech, stated that he had delivered in a plan to the Admiralty, which, if acted upon, must effectually secure our own coast, and completely destroy the flotilla of the enemy. The gallant Admiral has detailed to the house some parts of this plan; but he has not told us whether it was the production of his own brain or that of some other person, and doubtless it would be, from the specimen he has given us, a strong proof of his own gallantry to own it *(a laugh)*. Without pretending to much nautical knowledge, one might, I think, ques-

tion the correctness of the honorable admiral's ideas upon this project, for the practicability of making use of gun-boats to annoy the flotillas on the French coast is denied by every intelligent naval officer; but whatever is their use in the shoals along that coast, they surely are incapable of any utility, comparable to that which may be derived from large shipping upon our own coast. Wherever the latter can be employed, the former must be comparatively useless. It is notorious that all along from Pevensey to Dungeness, a man of war can anchor close in shore, such is the depth of water. This, therefore, is the description of force upon which I would place my confidence either for attack or defence. As to the former, who can entertain a doubt that, if the French gun-boats should venture out, and the slightest breeze should arise, that Captain Markham, whom I mention, not as a member of Parliament, for that I know would be irregular, but as a naval officer, that Sir Edward Pellew, Sir Thomas Trowbridge, or in fact any officer known in our naval records, would, with a single 74, shoot through, and sink a crowd of that contemptible craft? With respect to the number of seamen and marines now employed, it has been stated by the right honorable gentleman on the Treasury bench, that there are 98,000, which is only 2,00 short of the whole amount voted. But the honorable gentleman who spoke last is still dissatisfied. He says that there ought to be more men. He does not seem to recollect, that the vote of the house limited the Admiralty; and that it was at the time that vote was made, the honorable gentleman's objections would have been most timely and proper. That was the period to consider the amount of the force necessary to maintain the war. The Admiralty had thought 100,000 men sufficient, and it appeared that they were right, notwithstanding the honorable gentleman's disapprobation. They had, and it was not the least of their merit, collected this

vast force in the space of twelve months, notwithstanding the number of our other descriptions of force, and without interrupting the active employment of our population in the various avocations of commerce, manufactures, and agriculture. To the observations of the right honorable gentleman, on the propriety of building ships in the merchants' yards, I trust enough has been said by the honorable baronet (Sir Edward Pellew), at whose presence this night the house has reason to rejoice, to convince the right honorable gentleman of his error, and also to shew him that his partiality to gun-boats is not quite so judicious as he imagined. After what the honorable baronet has urged on this point, I should hope the right hon. gentleman will no longer attempt to maintain his argument, unless he be influenced by such magnanimity, that he would not wish to oppose the French gun-boats by any but their own matches. (*A laugh.*) I have heard a right honorable gentleman on the lower bench (Mr. Windham) often deplore, that "the days of chivalry was gone;" but surely that complaint can no longer be repeated, if the right honorable mover of the proposition before the house shall continue to manifest a wish rather to oppose gun-boats to those of the French, than to see a crowd of them run down by an English 74. This would be something like the feeling which I am sure would influence the right honorable gentleman on the lower bench, if, in passing through the street, he should happen to see two men engaged of unequal size and strength. The right honorable gentleman would immediately interest himself for the weaker party, and call into action that science for which he so distinguished, to release, and perhaps to avenge, him. (*A laugh.*) To be serious: it is absurd to say that we should at once give up that formidable description of naval force, in which we have always found our strength and our glory, and take up another which is condemned, not merely by the expe-

rience to which I have already referred, but by the judgment of the most respectable naval officers. That this charge too should be chosen, as the right honorable gentleman recommended, merely in order to reduce us to a level with the French boats, for no other argument to support the choice has been advanced, really surprises me. It is something like this, that if we had a stone wall to defend us against the shot of an enemy, it should be recommended to us to throw down the wall, and fling stones at our assailants. An anecdote has been very generally mentioned with respect to the right honorable gentleman who commenced this debate; it is said that he proposed this sentiment—"The volunteers, and a speedy meeting with the enemy on our own shores," This toast, I understand, was proposed among a number of volunteer officers above six months ago, at a time when the volunteers, upon whom we are so much to rely for our security, could not be much acquainted with discipline, if, according to the right honorable gentleman's assertion, they are even now very defective in that respect. I am as ready as any man to pay a just compliment to the right honorable gentleman's active endeavours to promote the improvement of the volunteers. I acknowledge that his solicitude for their advancement and glory is considerable, and probably he wishes to remove any impediment in their way. His desire is, perhaps, that they should have a full opportunity of distinguishing themselves pursuant to the toast I have quoted. If such be his view, he certainly could not accomplish it by better means than by contriving to have the defence of our country committed to his favourite gun-boats, instead of men of war. Independently of the other objections I have offered to those gun-boats, there is one which occurs to me of too much strength to be omitted. If they were of the same kind as those of last war, any description of men would be good enough, or too good, for them; and if good men were required for them,

they could not be had without deducting from the number necessary for our important shipping. Why then join with the corrupt band of detected peculators in censuring the Admiralty for not paying all the attention which the right honorable gentleman desired to these gun-boats? A little consideration ought to be sufficient to prevent any man from complaining of that respectable board;—that board which is respectable in the estimation of all men but mistaken partisans, or fraudulent contractors;—that board, which has had such numerous difficulties to encounter, all incurred by a solicitude to expose and punish fraud—to recover and to spare the public money. Has the right honorable gentleman read the five reports from the commissioners appointed to inquire into the abuses committed in the several branches of the naval department? If so, has he not there seen the foul corruption the abominable artifice, with which the Admiralty has had to struggle? Has the right honorable gentleman observed the frauds exposed in the second report—the block and coopers' contracts, where 2,000l. have been paid for work proved not to be worth 200l. Has he read the description of the plunder practised on seamen by prize agents? and if so, can he, can any man who loves the friends of his country and virtue, refuse his gratitude and admiration to the first lord of the Admiralty, who originated this inquiry—an inquiry which has irritated against him a host of enemies? they are enemies, however, which the noble lord must despise. It was but the prejudice of defeated vice against triumphant virtue. It could not disturb the noble Lord's mind. While he was only assailed by those worms who had fed and fattened upon the corruption of the navy—while he had only to reckon as his foes those who had proved themselves hostile to honor and justice, who had enriched themselves on the spoils of their country—while such only were his enemies, the noble lord would proceed in his course of glory as he did in the

victory on the memorable 14th of February, 1797, disdaining and declining to retaliate their attack; but when the right honorable author of the motion before the house becomes his assailant, the noble lord must feel surprised. Even that right honorable gentleman, however, cannot injure him. His fame stands too high—his character is too firmly established to be hurt by the assertions of any member; and I have no doubt that the noble lord will be ever found entitled to the applause and protection of his country. With regard to the right honorable gentleman's recommendation, that shipping should be built in the merchants' dock-yards, I shall only refer him to the ships mentioned by the honorable baronet, and also to the cases described in the reports of the commissioners of naval inquiry, particularly to the cases where it appeared that the persons who received payment for the ships built in merchants' yards, were clerks in the King's dock-yards. Is it possible to suppose, that collusions did not exist in such cases as these? The right honorable gentleman has said, that it is impossible during war to build any number of ships in the King's dock-yards, and that therefore a necessity arises of resorting to the merchants' yards. What a melancholy expression, that in those yards, where there were 3,200 men employed, nothing more than the repair of ships could be done! If so, then our surprise must be diminished, that a French fleet should have been permitted, in the course of the last war, to find its way to Ireland, where nothing but the elements offered to prevent a formidable French army from landing. If, however, the King's dock-yards are really so little useful, or rather so useless, they ought to be abolished altogether. A new system ought to be adopted. If they could only finish in these yards 24 sail of the line, 15 frigates, and some few sloops, in the course of twenty years, although it is known that 45 shipwrights can build a 74 in one year—as there are 3,200 shipwrights in those yards, and the

expense, &c. could not be less in twenty years than 4,100,000l. a sum equal to the building of the whole navy of England, it follows, of course, that it is bad policy to continue the maintenance of these dock-yards. It is, besides, well known that the internal system of these yards is bad. There is no difference in the wages allowed to the workmen; the unskilful can earn as much as those of a different description. Thus emulation is prevented, and many advantages, of course, lost to the employers. The right honorable gentleman may answer this, and say, that although so many abuses have been detected by the commissioners of naval inquiry, still the system of the dock-yards is good: but I assert, and am prepared to maintain the assertion, that abuse pervades in every department of the system. Does the right honorable gentleman know of the frauds which the commissioners have found to have been committed in every article with which these yards are furnished, particularly blocks? From these abuses arise the necessity of advertising for contractors to build shipping; and as to correct them, to produce integrity and arrangement in all the departments of the navy, is, and has been, the great endeavour of the high character upon whom it appears to be the object of the motion before the house to fix an imputation, I shall vote against it with as much satisfaction as ever I gave a vote since I had the honor of a seat in that house; fully convinced that such a motion is only calculated to gratify the corrupt, to frown upon reform, and to assail the reputation of a gallant officer, whose claims to the gratitude of the country can only be equalled by the esteem and attachment he enjoys among all that are great and good.

JUNE 18.

ADDITIONAL FORCE BILL.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer moved that the bill be engrossed.

Mr. SHERIDAN.—To the arguments, Sir, which have been urged in support of the measure before the house, the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Addington) who has just sat down has given such a full and fair reply, that I do not think it necessary to enter into the subject as I had otherwise intended. The objections to this bill have been so forcibly maintained by that right honorable gentleman, and he has put the subject upon such fair and constitutional grounds, that I should decline to trouble the house upon this occasion, if it were not for the observations of my right honorable friend (Mr. Canning), who has not confined himself to the bill under consideration, but has thought proper to introduce matter not strictly relevant, but yet of infinitely more importance than the bill itself—I mean my right honorable friend's allusion to the degree of confidence to which the present administration is entitled. My right honorable friend stated, that he was not disposed to adulation towards his right honorable friend who sits near him (Mr. Pitt) and for whom, no doubt, he entertains the most sincere respect and regard. I hope he will do me the justice to think, that I am equally incapable of adulation towards my right honorable friend on the same bench with me (Mr. Fox). I certainly am no flatterer, although in point of attachment to my right honorable friend, I will not yield to that which my right honorable friend on the opposite side can or does profess to feel for his right honorable friend beside him; with this difference, however, on my part, that my attachment to my right hon, friend on this side of the house is of a much longer standing—that it is the first, the strongest, and the only political attachment of my life. But my right

honorable friend disclaims adulation towards his friend, and, indeed, he seems to me to have had no occasion to do so, for he certainly did not deal in it; on the contrary, he has taken occasion to pronounce upon the conduct of his right honorable friend one of the bitterest satires that could be well imagined. My right honorable friend expresses his surprise that we who oppose this bill can contrive to co-operate, and that we can avoid quarrelling when we get into the lobby; but is it not equally, if not more a matter of surprise, that he can avoid quarrelling with some of his friends near him, to whom he has been so very lately in decided opposition, and particularly with the noble lord (Castlereagh) who appears now to have determined which of the "two strings" he should put to his bow? (*A laugh.*) If my right honorable friend will look at those about him he will find that the compliments and censures which he meant for the right honorable gentleman on the lower bench, (Mr. Addington), were applicable also to some of his present connections. Whatever praise or condemnation applies to the one, applies equally to the other, with this difference, that the compliment called forth by the retirement of the one from office, when the voice of parliament and the country called for it, is not deserved by the other, who still remain in power. Some part of the administration of the right honorable gentleman on the lower bench I most cordially approved, and his intentions in every instance I respected, because I firmly believed them to be pure and honorable. I esteemed the motives which actuated his public conduct, because I was certain of his disposition, whatever might be the sentiments of some of his colleagues, to govern the country upon the principles of the constitution. I know that his acceptance of office was a sacrifice, and I feel that his retirement from it was a triumph. But did my right honorable friend, I would ask him, mean it as a compliment to the right honorable gentleman, that

immediately upon his retirement from office, he started into an open, manly, and systematic opposition; or did he mean it as an indirect sarcasm upon the conduct of his right honorable friend? Did my right honorable friend mean to say, that when the right honorable gentleman resigned his situation, he did not offer an insidious support to his successor; that he did not seat himself behind him for the purpose of availing himself of the first opportunity to push him out; that when a motion of impeachment was made against his successor, he did not attempt to suspend the judgment of the question, by the shabby, shallow pretext of moving the previous question? No! Such has not been the conduct of the right honorable gentleman, and the line he has pursued will be entitled to commendation. What are we to think, what can my right honorable friend say of that course of proceeding which I have described? a course which had nothing manly, consistent, or direct about it. In this conduct, however, my right honorable friend did not participate, and of course merits no part of the censure attached to it by every generous and liberal minded man. My right honorable friend has given credit to the right honorable gentleman for retiring from office before he was forced out by actual opposition, for taking the hint from parliament. If he be serious in pronouncing this laudable, what can he think of the six members of the late cabinet who still continue in office, who consent to act with, and even subordinate to, the very right honorable gentleman who so lately treated them with contumely and contempt? If the behaviour of the one be manly, how are we to estimate the other? how are we to judge of the situation of that noble lord, (Hawkesbury), whose conduct in office appears to have given such particular offence to my right honorable friend? But I derive some consolation from the language of my right honorable friend, for as he applauds so much the act of the right honorable

gentleman, in having resigned his office when parliament and the country seemed to wish it, when he had in this house but a majority of 37, I have reason to hope, that as his right honorable friend had only a majority of 28 on a former evening, which majority will, I think, be reduced this night, my right honorable friend will recommend to him an imitation of the gallant and dignified conduct of the right honorable gentleman on the lower bench—that he will advise him not to persevere any farther with such a mean, decreasing majority, after having lost the confidence of all the independent part of parliament and the country. My right honorable friend, indeed, states that he would wish to see an administration formed upon a broader scale, and in this declaration I really believe him sincere. If he considers what his right honorable friend now is, and what he might have been, I am pretty sure that such must be his wish. I am also sure that my right honorable friend delivers his real sentiment when he states that he feels himself in a post of danger. I believe that he considers the administration to which he belongs as not at all likely to last; and I will go a step farther, I believe that neither himself nor his right honorable friend really think that it ought to last; for they must be aware that it is an arrangement which has excited discontent and complaint through every part of the country. It is indeed an arrangement of such a nature that my right honorable friend thinks it necessary to offer something in the shape of an apology for the part he has taken in it. My right honorable friend has taken occasion in some degree to contrast his attachment to his right honorable friend at the head of administration, with my attachment to my right honorable friend beside me; but there is this difference between us, that I can never follow the same line as that which my right honorable friend has done this night, to excuse his acceptance of a high office under the administration of his right honorable friend. I

do not feel it necessary to enter into any justification of my attachment to my right honorable friend; for although I do not find him holding one of the first offices in the government, I find him surrounded with honor; for although I do not find him leading a cabinet, I see him followed by all that is independent in the rank, character, consequence, and population of the country. I see him restored to the friendship of all those good and great men, from whom he has, though he never ought to have been separated, or rather I see those personages restored to him. In a word, I have the happiness to observe the public character of my right honorable friend placed on a more exalted eminence than it ever before stood on. An attachment to him, therefore, it cannot be any other than a source of the most gratifying pride to reflect upon. My right honorable friend, in the course of the justification which he has attempted for his conduct in co-operating with his right honorable friend, has dwelt a good deal upon the happy event of the removal of what he termed the late ministers, but my right honorable friend seemed to forget that that removal was far from being complete. To be sure some of those, with whom my right honorable friend professed to have been dissatisfied, were removed. He was dissatisfied with the conduct of the department for foreign affairs, and therefore out goes Lord Hawkesbury; and sorry I am to perceive that that noble lord has put the seal to his own condemnation, that being charged with mismanagement and incapacity, he consents to be degraded in order to make room for another noble lord, who certainly has yet to prove his ability, who has at least no experience to recommend him. This removal must no doubt be a source of much mortification to those who may be intimately connected with the noble lord: but this alone was not enough to satisfy my right honorable friend, and to reconcile him to the administration. He disliked the Admiralty, and therefore that silly,

incapable person, Earl St. Vincent, is removed; and his place is filled by that tried, experienced seaman, Lord Melville—*(a laugh.)* In the office of the war minister also, my right honorable friend saw good ground for complaint, and therefore the noble lord (Hobart), who held that situation is superseded by a noble lord who gallantly resigned the government of Ireland because it was a time of war and trouble, and much disturbance was apprehended in that country. Under such circumstances, it is no wonder that my right honorable friend should express his regret that his right honorable friend has not better support; for all those being dismissed for detected, acknowledged incapacity, according to the language of my right honorable friend, of whom his right honorable friend spoke in such lofty terms of praise, none remain in office, but those six of whom his right honorable friend did not think worth while to utter one word in the way of commendation. But of the right honorable gentleman's praise much now don't seem to be thought, and therefore it is, perhaps, that we have had no panegyric pronounced upon the qualifications of the persons just introduced into his cabinet. After the perfect knowledge of human nature, which the right honorable gentleman has manifested, particularly in the expedition to Holland, and the representation with respect to some of the late ministers, his opinions of mankind don't appear to be held in any estimation, and therefore, no doubt, it is that the house has not heard one word from the right honorable gentleman as to the merits of his new colleagues. I dare say, that this silence was in consequence of a previous stipulation. They most probably said to the right honorable gentleman, "You may give us ribands, titles, pensions, places, or any thing you like, but a character: do, for God's sake, save our names from the peril of your praise—for, if you praise us, both you and we shall be laughed at." My right honorable friend has frequently said, "Away with

the cant of not men but measures, for it is a frivolous notion, as it is not the harness, but the horses which draw the carriage;" but I would ask my right honorable friend, what is to become of the harness and carriage with such horses as his right honorable friend has now engaged? There are six of them that are old, and six new—a double set to be sure. The former are part of that "slow paced, lumpish, awkward collection," upon which my right hon. friend so severely commented in the discussion of Colonel Patten's motion. They of course can be of no use, and so the six new nags will have to draw not only the carriage, but those six heavy cast-off blacks along with it. (*A loud laugh.*) Now, if in such a situation my right honorable friend does not feel himself embarrassed, and anxious for the release of his right honorable friend and himself, he cannot have that feeling of dignity and solicitude for honorable reputation which I am willing to ascribe to him. Among the arguments advanced by my right hon. friend in favor of the bill before the house, there were some that struck me to be very extraordinary indeed. (Here Mr. Sheridan searching for his notes found they were lost, which produced a laugh, and the honorable member observed, that his right honorable friend, he dared say, was not sorry that he had lost them.) The honorable gentleman went on to animadvert on the observations which related to the amount of our public force, as inconsistent with the language used on other occasions by the same gentleman. My right honorable friend observed the honorable member, complains that we should express our disappointment that the measure before the house is not equal to the expectation we entertained, and states that from the number of troops already existing, it was impossible to draw more from the martial resources of the country than this bill proposes to obtain; but my right honorable friend should recollect that the fault lies with those by whom our imaginations were raised so high. If

we complain of disappointment, who raised our expectations? The right honorable gentleman in the course of his opposition to the late minister, held forth such high promises—talked of what he would do if in office, that he would submit a measure of vast importance, &c.—that it was impossible not to have our curiosity and expectations strongly excited; but after all this prodigious parade of means in contemplation for the increase of our public force, what do we see? Instead of plans at all promising efficiency, instead of looking for an armed Minerva from the brain of this Jupiter, we see a puny, rickety bantling, which after being sent to the parish nurse, does not appear to have gristle or bone ever to attain the age of manhood. In truth, I cannot suppose that the right honorable gentleman himself thinks that this bill will procure men. The only object seems to be to raise a tax upon the landed interest, to inflict penalties and enact forfeitures. The right honorable gentleman only proposes to levy a tax in a novel way. If, by such a system, men should really be had, I am persuaded that the right honorable gentleman would be more surprised than any other man in the country; that he would feel as much astonished as he lately was at the wonderful discovery, that but few ballotted men gave personal service. Even supposing that the proposed number of men could be recruited, where, I would ask, are six or seven thousand persons to be found qualified to officer them? The right honorable gentleman must know that the thing is impossible. But the mode suggested to discipline those corps is really ludicrous. The idea of attaching one battalion to another is not unlike that of throwing a young woman in the way of an old man for the purpose of courtship, in the hope that, after the opportunity of what is commonly termed "keeping company," they will "come together," matrimony must be the consequence. Absurd as this may seem, it is not

more so than that such a connection as that proposed in this bill, between a battalion of regulars and one of the new levies, can tend to promote or preserve discipline. It is ridiculous to talk of discipline in a corps where, as in the new levies, the officer will be urged to ask favors of their men. If a man belonging to the regulars shall be found tippling with any of the new levies, he can plead that he was endeavouring to prevail on the other to enlist for general service—that he was only employed in endeavouring to forward the views of government. At such irregularities as these officers must connive, or the enlistment from among those new levies will not be productive. From an army then so constituted and so employed, what evils are not to be apprehended! So fully convinced am I of the mischief that must result from it as to think that, if the bill should be adopted, the most appropriate title for it would be "a bill for the destruction of military discipline." In considering the means of providing for the defence of the country, I am sorry to perceive that gentlemen, whose opinion upon other occasions I most sincerely respect, should look so much, or rather entirely, to the extension of our regular army. With respect to the army, however, I wish to observe, that in my opinion men should be enlisted for that service not only on terms limited as to time, but as to place. The latter regulation would tend to save the lives of many soldiers, while the policy of the former is so generally acknowledged, and has been so often discussed, that the surprise is, that ministers hesitate to act upon it. Upon this question, as to the augmentation of our regular army, I cannot forbear to say, that I always look upon such augmentation with jealousy; I would not risk the liberties of the country, by the enlargement of our standing army. If I were asked whether I would not rather trust our defence in the field against the attack of a foreign foe to regular troops, I would

immediately answer in the affirmative; still, however, keeping in view the compromise between difficulties, the necessity of securing our freedom against the influence and power of a large standing army. I would have our volunteers and militia aided by a due proportion of the regular army. The people of this country are competent to their own defence, and are ready to take the tone from those above them. They have regarded for the high station which freemen may be supposed to feel; they have none of the slavish attachment to clans, but they look up to their superiors—and I use this word in its liberal sense—they look up to you, their superiors, with confidence, because you do not look down on them with insult. Give, then, to such a people proper example and encouragement, and you will not have any occasion to look for a large standing army to defend your country. The people of England know the value of the objects for which they have to contend. They feel that, from the constitution of the society in which they live, there is nothing of honor, emolument, or wealth, which is not within the reach of a man of merit. The landlord, the shopkeeper, or mechanic must be sensible that he is contending not merely for what he possesses, but for every thing of importance which the country contains; and I would call on the humblest peasant to put forth his endeavours in the national struggle to defend his son's title to the great seal of England. Acting upon this plan, employing proper means to animate the country, would render it unnecessary to hire an army to defend us or to resist any enemy. It is because I am satisfied of this fact—because I know that in this important conjuncture, which so strongly demands the valor of the brave, the vigor of the strong, the means of the wealthy, and the councils of the wise, we could obtain all that is requisite by operating judiciously upon the character of the people, that I object to the frequent call for an increase of our regular army, as I know

that such increase must invest the executive government with a power dangerous to the existence of liberty. I like an army of the people, because no people were ever found to commit a *felo de se* upon their own liberty; but I dislike a large standing army, because I never knew popular liberty in any state long to survive such an establishment. It is upon these grounds that I disapprove of the sentiments so often urged as to the augmentation of the regular army, and particularly by an officer whose information upon military subjects is no doubt entitled to the utmost respect; but whatever may be his information and experience upon military topics, if he had the ability of the Archduke Charles, until he shall look at the whole of the subject, until he shall examine it as a statesman, with a mixed attention to the rights of the people and the military defence of the country, I cannot defer to his opinions. With regard to the principles upon which the present administration is formed, I shall conclude with a few observations. The cause of the exclusion, which is so much and so justly complained of, we are all tolerably well able to conjecture; but it would be, I am aware, indecorous to describe it in this house. I know it would be unparliamentary to introduce into debate any particular allusion to this circumstance. Of the personage, however, to whom it refers, I cannot speak from any particular knowledge; but of him who is next in rank and consequence, I can say, that that illustrious personage whose name I know my duty too well to mention, who stood forward at the commencement of the war, displaying a noble example of his wish to promote unanimity, to rally all parties round the standard of the country, entertains no political prejudice against any public man—though, God knows, he has had much to forgive. Far however from indulging resentment, I am sure that he would be forward to accept, to call for the services of any

political character who could contribute in this great crisis to the safety of the empire.

For the motion 265; *against it* 223.

MARCH 6, 1805.

ADDITIONAL FORCE BILL.

Mr. SHERIDAN—I rise, Sir, in pursuance of the notice I took the liberty of giving on a former day, to move for leave to bring in a bill to repeal the act of last sessions, intituled, "An act to provide for the better defence of the country, and for the gradual increase of our disposable force." I choose to read the whole title of this act, rather in compliment to the feelings of the right honorable gentleman, than to call it by its general denomination, "Mr. Pitt's parish bill." It is impossible for me before I proceed further not to observe shortly on the impression which seemed to have been produced upon the gentlemen on the other side when I thought it my duty to give notice of this motion. Those gentlemen appeared to express surprise, not unaccompanied by some disapprobation, that I should attempt to propose bringing forward such a motion. What excited that surprise I am rather at a loss to conjecture. Perhaps the right honorable gentleman over against me thought that the debate on this subject need not go on any further, conscious, no doubt that the case stated by my right honorable friend on a former evening was but weakly supported; and that the answer of my right honorable friend who sits near him was quite sufficient, or rather that that answer contained matter so forcible and conclusive, argument and eloquence that overwhelmed us on this side of the house—that gave us such a shock that some time was necessary to enable us to meet it with any effect, to come fresh to the contest.

Perhaps too, the disapprobation which was manifested proceeded from this, that it was deemed disrespectful to the right honorable gentleman to press upon him any further discussion of a subject, to the consideration of which he seemed so peculiarly unwilling to proceed. In truth, the right honorable gentleman did appear to be very bashful of this topic, and I am quite sure that he very reluctantly touches upon it at all. Another cause of the disapprobation I allude to, may be attributed to this, that my notice implied a doubt of the force of that reply which the friends of my right honorable friend have been so anxious to extol. It was evidently the supposition of the gentlemen on the other side that the hint should be taken from the disinclination shewn by the right honorable gentleman to enter into this question, and that we should abstain from the performance of our duty. But regardless alike of the feelings of the right honorable gentleman himself upon this subject, as of the surprise or disapprobation of his advocates, I rise to bring forward this motion. It may be said, that any inquiry of mine into the military state of the country cannot be necessary, after the very able and comprehensive dissertation we have so recently heard from my right honorable friend on the lower bench, on that subject. With those who argue so I should most cordially agree; but it will be recollected, that in the course of that masterly review of my righ thonorable friend, he but incidentally noticed this act, which I conceive to be a disgrace to our statute book. It is natural that the gentlemen on the other side feeling this, aware that the act has utterly failed of its object, should disapprove of any attempt to ridicule its imbecility, to put a period to its existence. In endeavoring to accomplish this, some of those common-place censures which are thrown out against men who attempt to oppose any measure for the defence of the country, may be applied to me; but I feel that they are entirely inap-

plicable, for I contend that the act, which it is my object to repeal, is not a measure for the defence of the country; the bill has no such character or tendency. To oppose its continuance, therefore, cannot subject any man to that outcry which it is the fashion to raise against the opponents of measures of a different description. If the proposition I mean to submit to the house had the remotest tendency to injure the spirit, to depress the heart and feelings of the country, in the present emergency, I trust I should be the last man to bring it forward. But satisfied that it is calculated to produce quite a contrary effect, I cannot be dissuaded from pursuing it. Again, I repeat, that I cannot conceive the reason why my notice was treated as I have described on a former evening, nor can I anticipate how my motion may be treated this night. To the speech of my right honorable friend on the lower bench, I remember that the right honorable gentleman on the opposite side thought proper to preserve a most resolute and dignified silence. He did not seem to think that it was such as to call for the reply of a minister, and that the answer which it received from my honorable friend was sufficient to content him. I have often heard that the right honorable gentleman was rather an unreasonable, discontented, expecting kind of man; but if he really was contented with the reply of my right honorable friend near him to the speech of my right honorable friend on the lower bench, I must say, that he is the most easily contented man I ever heard of. I know that it has been asserted by the advocates of the right honorable gentleman, out of doors, that that reply was complete; but sure I am that no man in this house who heard it ever thought it so, and least of all was it so thought by my right honorable friend himself, who delivered it. I admire the talents of my right honorable friend as much as any man, yet, upon the occasion alluded to, I could not help observing the difficulty he had to struggle with; the

embarrassed and staggering course he made; I was conscious that my right honorable friend felt that he had very little to say to the purpose; that he was sailing against wind and tide; that although the puff of a cheer from his friends sometimes produced a slight swell in his sails, he could make but little progress; that he raised his voice aloud, but produced no impression; that he dropped argument and produced a noise; that, in fact, he made a fine catamaran speech *(A laugh)*, plenty of noise, but little mischief to his adversary at least. What mischief he may have done to the system he would support I cannot pretend to say. Having said so much as to the conduct of the gentlemen on the other side on a former evening, I shall now take notice of some of the propositions of my right honorable friend. I shall confine myself entirely to the military argument. There were some points in the speech of my right honorable friend which I am now unwilling to take up. If I were to dwell upon them, I should have no doubt of being cheered by the right honorable gentleman on the other side. In the wide scope of my right honorable friend's general view, he advanced some opinions from which I differ. In his view of some points in our military defence, I certainly cannot agree with him; but the honorable gentleman on the other side are much mistaken if they look for any thing from that difference which can afford them any amusement.—Whatever occasional warmth I may have shown in animadverting on the opinions of my right honorable friend, I have always felt and acknowledged the grounds of his opinions to be substantially good, and ever disposed to treat them with due deference. Yet I never could bring myself, in some important questions, entirely to concur with him. The volunteer system, for instance, I have ever thought, and do still think, entitled to the highest admiration, and to the particular gratitude of the country. I really do believe that the existence, the number,

and the spirit of the volunteers, had more power on the mind of the enemy, had more effect in making him shrink from attempting the execution of his menaced attack, than all our other force. I will not take upon myself to say that I have received any certain knowledge upon the subject, but I have enough to justify me in asserting, that the volunteers produced a most important effect on the resolutions of the French government, and particularly on the mind of Talleyrand; and this was naturally to be expected, for that gallant body served to dislodge the opinion which generally existed in France with respect to this nation. The volunteers shewed most satisfactorily that the "shop-keeping, indolent, luxurious," people of this country were not disposed to loll on their couches in a time of public danger, and trust wholly to an hired army for their defence. Whether the volunteer system was or was not exceptionable in the first construction of it, it must be matter of satisfaction to all men to know this important fact; and it must furnish a ground for peculiar congratulation to the volunteers themselves to find that they had so materially contributed to the safety of the state, and to the character of the country also. For they had convinced the enemy that all his calculations respecting us were unfounded. The volunteers have convinced him of the resolute spirit and unconquerable mind of the nation. I, therefore, cannot but be proud of the support I have uniformly given to the volunteer system, however much I may regret my difference of opinion with my right honorable friend, with whom I cannot help repeating that I also differ upon another important point; I still retain the opinion that I so often before stated, that the military force of this country ought to be varied, and that great advantages arise from our various descriptions of force. For whatever may be my confidence in the character and disposition of the regular army, I must say, that my opinion has undergone no change;

that the people of any country cannot long retain their liberty who trust altogether to an hired army. Some gentlemen, I understand, have said, that it would be imprudent to adopt this motion, that the repeal at present of the act to which it refers would damp the spirit of the country. But I would seriously put it to the candor of those gentlemen, whether it is rational to apprehend that the repeal of an act which, according to the knowledge and confession of every body, has totally failed, could create any dismay? I think the contrary is the rational calculations. But what will be said of the bill when the time and manner in which it was introduced is called to the recollection of the house? When the right honorable author of this bill was out of office, he exclaimed loudly against the imbecility and inactivity of his predecessor; he stated what a force he should produce if his plans were adopted. He complained of the limited amount of the force which his predecessor was able to raise. Yet, after all the pompous vaunting pledges of the right honorable gentleman; after all his promises of activity and vigor, when I's come in, what does I do? Can any man say that he has not completely broken his promises to this house and the country? After then the notoriety of such failure, and particularly with respect to this bill, is it not idle and absurd to tell the house that it would be indiscreet, that it would be shocking to mention a word about the failure to the country; that we should keep the thing snug to ourselves? Such a mockery is not to be endured. What, after the only measure which the right honorable gentleman has introduced since he dispossessed his predecessor, has proved inefficient as to the raising of men which was its professed object, to be told that this measure shall still be allowed to go on now that it is entirely become a tax bill! The demand implies extraordinary confidence. Before the right honorable gentleman returned to power, before he had

succeeded in removing what he and his friends so often termed the rubbish that stood in his way, we were told much of the extraordinary things that he had in contemplation for the defence of the country. We were told, indeed, that our salvation could only be effected by this great Cæsar; and yet what has he done to justify those assertions?—literally nothing. He may shew a regular army on paper, but whatever really exists is not attributable to him. He has made no contribution towards it, and, therefore, the hopes excited by his partisans have been wholly disappointed. The house and the country have had ample opportunity of appreciating the right honorable gentleman's powers. The delusion which his advocates had spread no longer exists; it is completely dissipated by the failure of this bill. To talk of concealing that failure from the country is quite nonsense; for in this case the people themselves are behind the scenes, they are under the apron of this great puppet-show, and, therefore, it is ridiculous to speak of concealing the fact from those who know it as well as we do. The great points to be considered by the house with respect to the motion I have the honor to submit are these: first, has the bill to which that motion refers failed of producing the effect which it professed originally to have in view? secondly, if it has failed, is it likely by its future operation to atone for that failure? and, if not, thirdly, would the repeal of it be attended with any danger? Now, as to the first point, it is admitted on all hands that the act has completly failed; and it will be recollected that the effects promised from it were not, according to the language of its author and advocates, to be produced by degrees, but at once. The right hon. gentleman vaunted that it was only necessary to place him in power to enable him to raise such an effective disposable army as should qualify the people not merely to defend the country, but "to hurl back the proud insulting menaces of the enemy."

It has been observed that my right honorable friend on a former day, treated this subject with much levity, which shewed that he really did not consider the state of the country dangerous, or requiring such further measures of defence as he recommended. But, however important and grave the subject of our military defence may be, and however necessary it may be seriously to consider every point connected with it, I would appeal to the candor of gentlemen, whether, when the lofty promises of the right honorable parent of this bill were compared with the result, it was possible to avoid ridiculing his pretensions? Is not the failure of his promises obvious? If he promised to raise men, and could only raise money, did he perform his promise? No; not even so nearly as if he had promised to procure horses for the carriage of the cavalry in the field, and instead of that had furnished oxen to draw the baggage. Let me not then be told that the right honorable gentleman has performed his contract. In order to render his failure evident, it is only necessary to look at the returns on the table of the general state of the army, and of this additional defence act in particular: it will be seen in those returns that the army under the right honorable gentleman's predecessor was not merely not improved by the boasted energy of the right honorable gentleman, but that it was rather deteriorated. I apprehend it will be said that no inquiry ought to be instituted under the administration of the right honorable gentleman, however necessary it was under his predecessor. It is, no doubt, convenient for the right honorable gentleman's friends to maintain that doctrine at present; but if an enquiry were to take place, I have good reason to think that the right honorable gentleman's administration would be found to be not less defective in the navy than in the army. I have heard it asserted that fifty ships have been added to our naval force since the right honorable gentleman's

accession to power; but this I most positively deny. If, however, I was to demand an enquiry, to ascertain this fact, I suppose it would be refused, on the ground that the character of the noble lord at the head of the Admiralty is such as to preclude the necessity of enquiry—that it is peculiarly entitled to confidence. But more of that noble lord hereafter. I shall now shew, from a short review of the returns on the table, what the exertions of the right honorable gentleman have produced for the army, and how the country has reason to feel from the change which placed the right honorable gentleman in power.

In Jan. 1804 the whole of our army amounted to - - - - -	191,099
In Jan. 1805 ditto - -	143,651
Deficiency -	47,448
In Jan. 1804 the militia - - -	109,947
In Jan. 1805 ditto - -	85,519
Deficiency -	24,428
Total of army and militia in Jan. 1804	301,046
Ditto in Jan. 1805	229,170
Deficiency -	71,876
The cavalry in Jan. 1804 - - -	17,177
Ditto 1805 - - -	21,223
Increase - -	4,046
The artillery in Jan. 1804 - - -	7,661
Ditto 1805 - - -	8,517
Increase - -	856

The foreign troops in 1804	- -	13,710
Ditto 1805 -	- -	21,028
	Increase - -	7,318

But, notwithstanding the increase in these departments, could it not surely be pretended that that in the foreign corps, for instance, added any thing to the disposable force of this country. What were 5,000 men, the amount of the addition at Ceylon, to the kind of force which it was the object of the additional force act to raise? or how was the right honorable gentleman entitled to claim any merit from that addition? There was an augmentation, it appeared, of our cavalry and artillery; but there was no actual reduction of the infantry of our regular army, amounting to 853 men; and any augmentation that has taken place in the different descriptions of force I have alluded to, or in the black troops of the West Indies, is attributable of right to the right honorable gentleman's predecessor. The measures which produced such augmentation were in operation before the right honorable gentleman came into office. But with respect to the act under consideration, no increase of our force at Ceylon, in the West or East Indies, has connection with this bill. The object of the bill was to raise a disposable force for England, and in that object it has not succeeded: the addition of 11,000 men to the whole of our military force, in the year 1804, which has been so much boasted of, is, I contend, owing to the provisions of the right honorable gentleman's predecessor, whose administration it was so much the fashion of the right honorable gentleman and his advocates to describe as milk and water, as nauseous broth, &c. But I believe that many of those gentlemen would now be ready to retract their words. Whether they would or not I feel quite certain that I happened, with some other gentlemen on this side of the house, to be

perfectly right in our opinion, that if the right honorable gentleman's predecessor should be removed, an administration much more deserving the character of imbecility, and something worse, would follow. In this apprehension we were but too well founded: the right honorable gentleman had promised and performed nothing: the increase of the cavalry arose from the plan of raising men for rank; the raising of the German legion, and the augmentation of the artillery entirely belonged to the project of the right honorable gentleman's predecessor. The merit of the whole belonged to the noble lord now at the head of his majesty's councils—council I mean (*a laugh*). Whether that noble lord be at present really as well as nominally at the head of the council, I do not mean to enquire, nor do I think it a matter of any consequence. My object is to shew that the right honorable gentleman has disappointed the expectations which his assurances excited; that his abuse of his predecessor was unfounded, and that if he be enabled to send any force out of the country, or to perform any exploit, he owes the capacity of doing so to Lord Sidmouth. That the right honorable gentleman has derived no assistance from the only scheme for recruiting the army which he has proposed will be obvious from a view of the returns under this additional force act, which, in point of fact, was ludicrously unproductive. From the 5th of July, to the 5th of February, this redoubted bill has only produced 1295 men in England and Wales, 266 of whom had deserted, or been discharged, leaving only 1029 effective men. This was the entire fruit of all these exertions of "local knowledge and sympathetic feeling," from which the right honorable gentleman proposed to obtain so much. For this amount of men had all the lords lieutenants and deputy lieutenants, bailiffs, overseers, constables, and parish officers, been put in motion; for this small number of recruits had little less than 40,000 persons been

set to work. Out of the number I have mentioned which were raised under this act, it appears that 323 men have enlisted for general service, which is about 4½ men for each county. Of this number, however, 88 of which were raised for the parishes by the regular recruiting officers, 30 deserted, and 33 were discharged as unfit for service. In Ireland the return under this act is 1031 men. The zeal of that country was quite satisfied to get on a level with the produce of this; but here it thought proper to stop: not one, however, of these men has enlisted into the regular service—so much for Ireland. But to return to this country—it seems to be the case that the parishes have seldom, under this act, furnished a good soldier, and particularly in the manufacturing countries. The object of those officers was rather generally to get rid of vagrants, so that the greater number collected from the manufacturing counties were found to desert or to be unfit for service. Of the number raised by parish officers who enlisted for general service, 52 were from Lancashire, half of whom deserted; and what was the case with respect to Kent, where the right honorable gentleman's influence, one would suppose, must be powerful? Why, it furnished eleven men, all of whom deserted. But I would beg the particular attention of the house to the produce of the Cinque Ports, with which the right honorable gentleman is so particularly connected; where he has so much weight, both in his civil and military capacity; where he is said to be so much adored as a general and as a man. The Cinque Ports have produced one man; and no doubt he is an extraordinary man, if one could see him. He is, perhaps a Milo or Hercules, and might be equal to the numerous produce of another district; as in the fable of the lioness and the sow, where the lioness said to the latter, what signifies your numerous brood? I have but one—*sed ille leo est (A loud laugh)*. I remember a story, that after an engage-

ment, some persons inquired for Lord Donegall's regiment, anxious to know its fate; one soldier appeared and exclaimed, "I am Lord Donegall's regiment" *(A loud laugh)*. Perhaps this man from the Cinque Ports would be found *ipse agmen (A laugh)*. To be serious, I cannot but consider this bill on the whole a disgrace to its author. Though I state this, I would not be understood to insinuate that whatever difference of opinion may prevail on particular points, we are not all of us of one heart and one mind, as to the necessity of providing effectually for the defence of this country. I mean then that this bill is a disgrace from its total inefficacy, and from its mode of attempting to be efficacious. It first goes into the parish as a beggar, and if unsuccessful in begging, it assumes the character of a bully; it tells the parish officer, "if you do not raise the men I desire, I would advise you to drop 20*l.* in a certain place, or I will mulct you to double that amount." To those who complain so much of the parish officers not having done their duty under this bill, I would ask why the privy council did not set them a good example, by doing their duty? Had the privy council done so, the proclamation of Lord Hawkesbury would not have been delayed so long. From this instance of neglect in the privy council I should think it would be necessary in any future acts, where that council should have any duty to execute, that a clause should be inserted to inflict a penalty upon them for neglect. As to the double penalty threatened on the parishes which are deficient under this act, I think the collection of it would not be less difficult than oppressive. This bill was originally said to be for the purpose of expedition, yet, when we complain of its failure in this respect, we are told to wait, that it will still operate what it promised. We have heard a good deal lately of the preparation of carriages, for the speedy conveyance of soldiery, &c. Now, suppose any man came forward and said, "destroy all

those vehicles; I have got one on a new principle, that will carry twenty men, at the rate of eight miles an hour." Suppose all those carriages were destroyed, and the boaster were relied on. Well, the twenty men get into his new carriage to set off to Windsor; some hours afterwards you meet him and the men at Kensington—on coming back?—no, but on his progress, for he had absolutely got no further. Still the boaster would say, give me time and I will yet accomplish the journey. What would you say to such a man? And yet exactly similar is the language which the right honorable gentleman holds to the house with regard to this bill. If a man were to persuade you to throw away your blunderbuss, and offer a gun of his invention in its stead, after hearing the man's praise of his invention, you attempt to fire it off—it misses fire—it burns priming. But still he urges you to keep it to your shoulder, assuring you, that it only hangs fire. This you might do for a little time; but what would you think of your man if his gun hung fire for six months, as this bill has done? *(A laugh)*. Why really, Sir, it is impossible to look at this bill in any way without laughing at it. The right honorable gentleman proposed that it should furnish a sword and a shield for the country—but it now turns out that this sword is only fit to be a soup ladle, and the shield a fish plate *(A laugh)*. The right honorable gentleman, however, and his friends have attempted to solace the country for the failure of this bill, by asserting, that an addition has been made under his administration to the amount of our naval force; but this I positively deny. I assert that nothing has been added to our naval force, and that the navy itself is in a state much inferior to that in which Lord St. Vincent left it. When we come to examine the fact as to the fifty ships alleged to have been added to the navy under the present Admiralty, we shall find that no less than thirty of them were old West-Indiamen; that one fifty gun ship

that was sent to the Downs was pronounced incapable of keeping the sea, and sent back into port; that another of the new vessels, the Weymouth, sent to convoy some merchantmen with which she should not keep company, was from her not being seaworthy, incapable of making her way, and therefore kept back the convoy. It would also appear on inquiry, that the present Admiralty had ordered the purchase of some West-Indiamen in the river, which were reported to that board to be incapable of being made fit for use at the time of the purchase, and which were still lying in the river. Such are the ships of war which the present vigorous Admiralty has added to our fleet, and they have, against that addition, reduced it by dismantling seven ships of the line and several frigates. By the bye, as a sample of the wisdom of building vessels of war in merchants' dock-yards, which the right honorable gentleman once so strongly recommended, all those dismantled vessels had been so built, and not one of them had been in use above seven years. The addition of men alleged to be made to the naval service, under the present Admiralty, does not exceed five thousand. Will then any man attempt to compare the present first lord of the Admiralty, in point of vigor and efficiency, with his noble and gallant predecessor? The comparison would be ridiculous, and yet the right honorable gentleman on the other side thought proper, on a former occasion, in reply to a question, in which no allusion of such a nature was naturally called for, to arraign the conduct and character of that highly deserving nobleman. I say it was not fit or becoming in the right honorable gentleman to do so. He had accused the noble lord without affording him any prospect of an opportunity of coming to trial or refuting the accusation. I know that the noble lord is ready to vindicate his character from any charge that can be brought against it, and that he pants for a full investigation of his conduct. If the present administration will

not grant him that, and it should become necessary, from the circumstances of the country, to call the noble lord into the service—to raise his flag, with this imputation, cast by the right honorable gentleman, still lying on his character; what I would ask, might the consequences be to the discipline of the fleet? I am afraid that in such a case the minister would be found to have incurred a deep responsibility to his country. The right honorable gentleman has thrown out a half charge against the noble lord, that he was disposed to tyranny, and what must be the consequence of such a represesentation upon the discipline and opinion of the sailors who might be placed under the command of the noble lord? Having said so much as to the matter and the effects of this bill, I beg to say a word upon the bill itself. In looking over it, every clause seems to be drawn up with a characteristic degree of confidence. It states, first, that whereas it is necessary to raise eighty-five thousand men; it proposes to raise that number within the year. In the next year it proposes to raise as many men as should be necessary to supply the deficiencies occasioned in the additional force, &c. by enlistments for general service. Afterwards, the bill becomes somewhat moderate, and promises to supply substitutes only for nine hundred men each year, which is the estimated amount of enlistment for general service, and the substitutes are not to exceed that number. But the most curious part of this curious bill is, that the parish officers are restrained from procuring men beyond a certain distance from their respective parishes, while the regular recruiting officer, who is to provide the men in case the parishes fail, is at liberty to procure those men wherever he can get them. Another singular thing in the act is, that it is not specified what bounty the parishes shall be permitted to give, whether one pound or ten. This was left at the discretion of government, and therefore ministers may, if they please to render this tax productive, levy the

penalty of 20*l.* or 40*l.* according to their pleasure. But it is impossible these penalties can ever be levied, for all parishes in England are the delinquents. This defect in the bill I have just alluded to was, I recollect, corrected in the bill for Ireland, for in that the bounty was limited to two-thirds of the amount of the bounty settled for the regular army. If the right honorable gentleman should say that this money to be raised from the penalties is to be applied to the raising of men, I should reply that that would be no defence for the tax. The right honorable gentleman, indeed, must know that the objects to which it might be intended to apply any tax, would be no argument in favor of that tax. The friends of the right honorable gentleman are generally heard, I understand, to maintain, that although the act under discussion has completely failed, there is yet, in consequence of the respect and confidence due to the character of the right honorable gentleman, no ground for alarm, dismay, or inquiry, as to the circumstances in which we are placed. With respect to the claim of confidence, so confidently alleged, I can really see no ground to sustain it. We have heard much of the inefficient administration of the right honorable gentleman's predecessor, and I cannot perceive any particular difference that has arisen. Certainly the change is such as I cannot describe, nor can I believe, any body else. At the time the administration of the right honorable gentleman's predecessor was on the decline, the general voice was for what was called a broad-bottomed administration. My right honorable friend on the opposite side (Mr. Canning) expressed a particular wish for the establishment of such an administration, and I firmly believe that he was sincere in that wish. Perhaps others were equally sincere upon that point, but not being acquainted with them I cannot say positively. However, the wish so often expressed by my right honorable friend and so many other gentlemen in this house, and so

strongly felt by the country at large, was disappointed. The right honorable gentleman went into office alone—but lest the government should become too full of vigor from his vigorous support, he thought proper to beckon back some of the weakness of the former administration. He, I suppose, thought that the administration became, from his support, like spirits above proof, and required to be diluted; that, like gold refined to a certain degree, it would be unfit for use without a certain mixture of alloy; that the administration would be too brilliant, and dazzle the house, unless he called back a certain part of the mist and fog of the last administration to render it tolerable to the eye (*A laugh*). As to the great change made in the administration by the introduction of the right honorable gentleman himself, I would ask, does he imagine that he came back to office with the same estimation that he left it? I am sure he is much mistaken if he fancies that he did. The right honorable gentleman retired from office because, as was stated, he could not carry an important question, which he deemed necessary to satisfy the just claims of the Catholics; and in going out he did not hesitate to tear off the sacred veil of majesty, describing his sovereign as the only person that stood in the way of this desirable object. After the right honorable gentleman's retirement, he advised the Catholics to look to no one but him for the attainment of their rights, and cautiously to abstain from forming a connection with any other person. But how does it appear now that the right honorable gentleman is returned to office? He declines to perform his promise; and has received, as his colleagues in office, those who are pledged to resist the measure. Does not the right honorable gentleman then feel that he comes back to office with a character degraded by the violation of a solemn pledge given to a great and respectable body of the people upon a particular and momentous occasion? Does the right honorable

gentleman imagine either that he returns to office with the same character for political wisdom, after the description which he gave of the talents and capacity of his predecessors, and after having shewn by his own actions that his description was totally unfounded? The house will recollect the high panegyric which he took occasion to pronounce upon the ability of Lord Hawkesbury. That noble lord, the right honorable gentleman asserted, was more competent to the office of secretary for foreign affairs, than any man on this side of the house, or in the country; my honorable friend (Mr. Fox), to whom he condescended to pay that compliment, alone excepted; and yet he has now cashiered that noble lord as quite unfit for that office, and turned him down to the office of secretary for the home affairs.—Thus, although the right honorable gentleman has since undertaken to make such men ministers as he thought fit, has set up no other rule for choosing them but his own will, he stands convicted in the recollection of the house and the country, of an utter incapacity to judge of the abilities of men. How then can the country confide in him, or the cabinet that he constructs? If the right honorable gentleman be so incapable of forming a just estimate of the powers of men with whom he was so familiar as with Lords Sidmouth and Hawkesbury, how can he pretend to speak as to the competency of strangers? How is he able to decide as to the choice of proper persons to fill the several offices connected with the domestic and foreign relations of government? How can the right honorable gentleman be relied upon on these important points? He has given the most glaring evidence of his utter incapacity and ignorance upon points which are essential in forming the mind of a great statesman, and with the notoriety of this evidence he cannot, surely, to flatter himself as to fancy that his introduction to an administration can entitle that administration to the confidence of this house.

and the country. I will not go minutely into an examination of the characters of the subaltern ministers with whom he is connected, nor shall I call on him to explain what he means by counting noses in a cabinet. He seems to mean, that he would not enter into any cabinet where he would be obliged to count noses. But I rather think that at the time he was in a cabinet with my right hon. friend on the lower bench (Mr. Windham), and a noble friend of mine in another house (Lord Grenville), noses were counted; and I can see no reason why the right hon. gentleman should pretend to be exempt from such counting, or should attempt to do it away altogether, unless, like the nose of the man at Strasburgh, alluded to in Tristram Shandy, he imagines his own nose of much more importance than that of any other man. But to return to the right hon. gentleman's extraordinary claim to confidence, I maintain, that it is quite unfounded, particularly because, for the reasons I have stated, he has returned to office with a diminished character, and a recorded conviction of incapacity. If then the right hon. gentleman be so convicted, and has no claim to confidence, where shall I find ground for it among his colleagues? As to the noble minister of war (Lord Camden), I presume he is no wiser than when I described his pretensions before. The noble lord (Castlereagh) who sits near the right hon. gentleman, stands in rather an odd way in the present administration, as he did in the last. From him, indeed, the cabinet can derive no brilliancy. The Lord Chancellor, I suppose, possesses the same knowledge in the present cabinet, as he did in the last. Here there was no change, and I presume that the right honorable gentleman has not yet discovered that that noble lord is ignorant of the law. Now, with respect to Lord Mulgrave, who is chosen to fill that office, the duties of which, according to the right honorable gentleman, no other man in England but Lord Hawkesbury and my honorable friend was

competent to discharge, I should be glad to know in what the superiority of that noble lord consisted? That noble lord, I recollect, was at Toulon, into which he got through the treachery of some of the people of the town. Whether he managed well or ill there, it is not my business to inquire, nor is it material to ascertain. The noble lord has now got into a "state of comfortable security" (alluding to a phrase of the noble lord's in a dispatch from Toulon) to which I cannot conceive him to have any claim on the score of ability. But there is certainly one thing in favor of the noble lord, and I say it without any partiality to him—he has not had any character from the right honorable gentleman. (*A loud laugh*). That certainly pleads for him, and gives him a decided advantage over Lord Hawkesbury, who had the misfortune of suffering him so much by the character given of him by the right honorable gentleman. As the right honorable gentleman has not said a word to recommend the noble lord's ability for the foreign office, he stands some chance of being qualified for it. There is a noble duke in the cabinet also who seems to be introduced as an ornament. This noble duke appeared ready to fill a place in any cabinet; no minister could be distressed for a person to fill up a vacancy in his cabinet, while this obliging personage was to be found. Indeed, however the reservoirs for the army have failed, there seems to be of late a reservoir for ministers which cannot fail; you have only to turn a cock, and out pops a minister. So far as I have gone, at the comparison will not be denied to be rather in favor of the feeble administration of the right hon. gentleman's predecessor. But then I am told, there's the first lord of the admiralty—"do you forget the leader of the leader of the grand catamaran project?" Are you not aware of the important change in that department, and the advantage the country is likely to derive from that change? Why,

I answer, that I do not know of any peculiar qualifications the noble lord has to preside over the admiralty; but I do know, that if I were to judge of him from the kind of capacity he evinced while minister of war, I should entertain little hopes of him. If, however, the right hon. gentleman should say to me, Where else would you put that noble lord? Would you have him appointed war minister again? I should say, Oh no, by no means—I remember too well the expeditions to Toulon, to Quiberon, to Corsica, and to Holland, the responsibility for each of which the noble lord took on himself, entirely releasing from any responsibility the commander in chief and the secretary at war. I also remember that, which, although so glorious to our arms in the result, I still shall call a most unwarrantable project—the expedition to Egypt. It may be said, that as the noble lord was so unfit for the military department, the naval was the proper place for him. Perhaps there were people who would adopt this whimsical reasoning. I remember a story told respecting Mr. Garrick, who was once applied to by an eccentric Scotchman, to introduce a production of his on the stage. This Scotchman was such a good-humoured fellow, that he was called "honest Johnny M'Cree." Johnny wrote four acts of a tragedy, which he shewed to Mr. Garrick, who dissuaded him from finishing it, telling him that his talent did not lie that way; so Johnny abandoned the tragedy, and set about writing a comedy. When this was finished, he shewed it to Mr. Garrick, who found it to be still more exceptionable than the tragedy, and of course could not be persuaded to bring it forward on the stage. This surprised poor Johnny, and he remonstrated. "Nay, now, David (said Johnny), did you not tell me that my talents did not lie in tragedy?" "Yes (replied Garrick), but I did not tell you that they lay in comedy." "Then, (exclaimed Johnny), gin they dinna lie there, where the de'il dittha lie, mon? (*A loud laugh.*) Unless

the noble lord at the head of the admiralty has the same reasoning in his mind as Johnny M'Cree, he cannot possibly suppose that his incapacity for the direction of the war department, necessarily qualifies him for the presidency of the naval. Perhaps, if the noble lord be told that he has no talents for the latter, his lordship may exclaim with honest Johnny M'Cree, "Gin they dinna lie there, where the de'il dittha lie, mon? *(A loud laugh.)* With regard to the military system, I must confess that I am a friend to it. The high bounties have been complained of; but this evil does not originate in the system itself, but from the abuse of the system. But when you expect a higher degree of discipline in the militia than is consistent with the nature of that service, when you carry the troops to a great distance from their homes, the bounty must be in proportion to the service required. I cannot conceive a more meritorious character than that of the men of property, who leave their homes and their comforts to bring to a proper state of discipline these regiments; but when you break your faith with the troops, when you put them in situations where it is impossible for them to refuse compliance with your unreasonable proposals, when you place them in the way of snapping their fingers in the faces of their officers, is it wonderful that a high bounty should be demanded? They have been entrapped into foreign service, they have been sent to Holland, to Egypt, and to other places, and it is natural that the bounties should rise to an extraordinary height. I would say one word more on the recruiting for rank. It does appear to me that there can be no objection to it, when you cannot easily procure men in any other way. In such a case, there can be no serious harm in ushering brave young men forward a little quicker than by the ordinary steps. Besides, the more the ranks of the army are filled by men of property and independence, the less jealousy need be entertained of it; and the more we may be disposed

to regard it with affection. Another point which has been before insisted upon by my right honorable friend (Mr. Windham) in enlisting of men for a limited time. Considering the reasonable and advantageous nature of the proposition, it is astonishing to me that it yet remains to be done. There can be no doubt that His Majesty would consent to this, if advised to it by his ministers. Since the honorable gentleman's great plan has failed, why not attempt this one? This would undoubtedly procure men, and it comes recommended by every argument of humanity and justice. It is improper to enlist poor boys for life, perhaps before they well know the nature of the engagements they are contracting. It is improper in a constitutional point of view, for it is right that those who fight for the constitution should have an opportunity of enjoying its benefits. What do they know of the constitution, according to our present military system? I do, indeed, believe that it is the best on the face of the earth; but it is so much the more unfortunate that our soldiers should be ignorant of its blessings. Suppose they were sent in their earliest years to a foreign country, and there told to fight for their country and constitution; they would be informed, that they fought for the most glorious constitution, and the most excellent country in the world; but then they must be sensible that they are never to see it, and what in this case does its excellence signify to them? But if the soldiers were made sensible of the benefit of our constitution, and brought to indulge the hope of being permitted to enjoy its blessings; if they should be taught to look forward to the indulgence of one day sitting under the shade of this spreading tree, of being refreshed with the fragrance of its blossoms, and of tasting its fruit, then the great complaint of high bounties, and a want of men, would be done away. Now, Sir, I would call the attention of one set of gentlemen particularly to this subject. I would request the country gentlemen

to consider it *de novo*, and say, whether they can submit to the unjust tax that is imposed by this measure on the landed property of the country.—Next, Sir, I would address another set of gentlemen, those who supported the predecessor of the right honorable gentleman, for their concurrence in the motion which I am now about to propose. I gave that noble lord my support, feeble as it was, from a conviction that he was pursuing those measures which were best calculated to promote the interests of the country, and because he kept the right honorable gentleman out of office. My support had nothing interested in it; of that the noble lord is himself convinced, and so is he from whom I could not separate without causing a schism in my own heart. But I call upon the noble lord's friends, those whom he headed in opposition to this very measure, to support me on the present occasion. I ask, then, if the noble lord himself had not been placed in the other house, if no reconciliation had taken place, is there a man among his adherents who would not vote with me on this occasion? This bill only operates as an impost tax. At this moment, when taxes are so heavy, and when it is so desirable that they should be borne with patience and willingness, care is to be taken that they be imposed in a just and impartial manner. I have seen the day when the country gentlemen were more independent, and more powerful in the house. But there is another thing which is blameable in the conduct of the right hon. gentleman's administration. The country gentlemen have not only lost a great deal of their independences, but the peerage has been degraded. During the seventeen years in which the right honorable gentleman continued in administration, almost a moiety of the house of peers are of his creating. These, for the most part, were not created for any great public services, but merely for the convenience and assistance which they afforded to ministers. It is impossible that these

things can go on much longer with safety to the constitution. I would not willingly dwell upon the circumstance of the preponderance which the right honorable gentleman has given to the commercial interests over the landed. I do not wish now to give any express opinion on that subject; but one thing is certain, that it has created an anomaly in this country, which is, an assembly governing a large tract of territory (the East Indies), which is not subject to the people of this empire. I do entreat, that on this decision gentlemen will lift themselves above all considerations of party, and vote against this measure, which is found to be inefficient. This is the only way in which we may be sure of inspiring our friends with confidence, and our enemies with fear. This is the way in which we may expect to bring the present arduous contest with the most daring, the most enterprising enemy with whom we ever had to contend, to a safe and honorable termination. The present question puts all this at issue. If gentlemen vote with me on this occasion, then our country will have a proper confidence in our own exertions. Europe will be satisfied that the hands and the hearts of the nation are engaged in our measures. Foreign nations who may join us, will be confident of firm and active support; and we may then with boldness bid defiance to all the efforts and machinations of the most ambitious, the most savage, the most powerful, and most unprincipled foe that ever attempted to disturb the peace of the world, to overturn the unrivalled constitution, and destroy the unequalled blessings of a great, a free, and a happy people. Mr. Sheridan concluded with moving, "That the additional force act should be read." This being ordered to be entered as read, he moved the repeal of the said act.

Mr. Pitt and Lord Castlereagh replied.

Mr. Sheridan was not surprised that the noble

lord had felt so forcibly that he and his friends had been called upon for some answer, and for their reasons for still supporting this bill. If they had given no answer, it might very fairly have been inferred that it was because they had nothing to say. In their answer, however, they took care to avoid the main objections, that it was unconstitutional in its principle, and that it had completely failed in its effect. The noble lord, however, conceived that the argument of the bill not having been fairly tried, was too strong for the great abilities of his honorable friend (Mr. Fox) to combat. He had forgotten, however, that the greatest part of that honorable gentleman's speech was entirely directed to this very point, and to prove that there was nothing to be hoped or expected from it. In Ireland where it was said the bill had produced men, the fact was, that not a man had enlisted for general service, which was the professed object of the bill; and, in England, if the number raised by regimental recruiting was subtracted, it would appear that there had been no more than 787 men raised by the parish officers according to the provisions of the bill; and when it was considered that the promise went as far as raising 27,000 by this time. He then observed, that the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had complained that he had used harsh and strong language towards him; although he was a warm speaker in the house, he never harbored much personal animosity against any man; he supposed, however, the right honorable gentleman meant to contrast his language with his own singular gentleness and meekness of manners, his moderation and total abstinence from sarcastic or biting remarks. He had stated that he (Mr. Sheridan) had wandered entirely from the subject; that he appeared to know nothing of the bill, except its title; and that he appeared to have hoarded up a collection of jests and sarcasms to throw out upon him. If his speech, however, had been so very

ignorant and unworthy of the serious attention of the house, there was no occasion for the right honorable gentleman to jump up immediately to reply to it himself:

"Nec Deus intersit, nisi Deo vindice nodus,"

was a maxim well understood by that gentleman. The right honorable gentleman had attacked him for bringing charges against his colleagues, who were not in that house to defend themselves: he had taken up the glove for the first lord of the admiralty. For his part, he had really a respect for that noble lord as a man of business, that did not pretend to more talents than he possessed; but there were many differences between him and his predecessor in office; he had no occasion to be at his desk by four o'clock in the morning examining abuses; but, on the other hand, he went in a boat to superintend, or rather to judge with critical eye of the explosion of his own catamarans. At Walmer Castle, he and his right honorable friend had another Alexander's feast. Whether they had a Timotheus of their party report does not say; the jolly dog, however, was not absent. There, like Alexander, "they seized a torch with fury to destroy;" and, if they did not succeed, perhaps it was because there was no Thais at Walmer Castle.—But (continued Mr. Sheridan) the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) has thought fit to charge me with insincerity in the support I gave to the late administration. I say that this charge is contrary to the fact: I gave my support to it with the utmost good faith, and I know that Lord Sidmouth has always been ready to acknowledge it. But, supposing I had not supported him with fidelity and firmness; what then? I never had professed to do so, either to that ministry or to this house. I approved of their measures, and I thought besides, that their continuance in office was a security against the right honorable gentleman's return to power,

which I always considered as the greatest national calamity. If, indeed, I had, like him, recommended Mr. Addington to His Majesty and the public, as the fittest person to fill his high station, because it was a convenient step to my own safety, in retiring from a station which I had so grossly abused, and which I could not longer fill with honor or security: if, having done so from such unwarrantable motives, I should have tapered off by degrees, from a promised support, when I saw the minister of my own choice was acquiring a greater stability and popularity than I wished for: and if, when I saw an opening to my own return to power at a safer period than when I had left it, I had entered into a combination with others whom I meant also to betray, from the sole lust of power and office, in order to remove him; and if, under the dominion of these base appetites, I had then treated with ridicule and contempt the very man whom I just before held up to the choice of my Sovereign, and the approbation of this house and the public; I should, indeed, have deserved the contempt of all sound politicians, and the execration of every honest private man; I should, indeed, have deserved to be told not merely that I was hollow and insincere in my support, but that I was mean, base, and perfidious.

For the motion 127; *against it* 267.

MAY 13, 1806.

REPEAL OF ADDITIONAL FORCE BILL.

Mr. Windham moved the order of the day, for the third reading of the additional force act repeal bill.

Mr. SHERIDAN did not consider these constant insinuations of gentlemen on that side of the house, wishing to triumph over the measures or memory of a great man, who is now no more, as being at all justified by any part of their conduct. This was

now the fourth debate which the house had had upon this bill. In the first, it seemed as if there had been a council held among the opposers of it, and that it had been resolved, "Let us attack all the measures that have been proposed or suggested, but let no man say a word about the bill." In that debate they therefore cautiously abstained from meddling with the bill itself. The second debate was began by a military general (Sir James Pulteny), certainly of very high consideration. That General, however, entirely abstained from the military view of the question, and confined himself to its civil operation. In the third debate, both the civil and military questions were declined, and the argument was principally about the clause of refunding, which was the chief subject of the right honorable gentleman's argument upon the present occasion. If the gentlemen on the other side of the house had been twenty months before they could understand their own bill, they were not to triumph much even if they should find any omission in the present. He did not think it quite decent of the learned gentleman (Mr. Percival) to say, that his right honorable friend had not read the bill that he proposed to repeal. Since he had made that assertion, he thought himself warranted in saying, that the bill had been drawn up in a manner so confused and unintelligible, that he could not but consider the learned gentleman himself as the framer of it *(a laugh)*; and from the little knowledge he discovered of that bill, he was only the more confirmed in his opinion. The learned gentleman in ridiculing another system said, that some men had such an idea of the wonders that might be discovered, as to suppose a plough might be constructed to do its work by itself. Now, certainly the parish bill was not a machine of that construction, for with forty teams of horses, or rather with forty teams of *asses* (for so it seemed the parish officers were to be described), it did no work at all. The right ho-

norable gentleman had warned His Majesty's ministers not to be intoxicated by the sweets of power, nor led away by the pleasure of triumphing over the measures of their rivals: he, therefore, thought that he had a right, from the "bed of roses" on which they supposed His Majesty's ministers to be placed, to warn the gentlemen on the other side of the house not to be too much mortified by their disappointment, nor to be so excessively soured by their change of situation, as to look on every thing in an unfavorable light. *(A laugh.)* The right honorable and learned gentleman had said, that if his right hon. friend (Mr. Windham) would but take time to consider, he was sure he would change his sentiments; and yet the principal accusation against his right hon. friend had been, that he had taken too much time to consider, and that he delayed his measure too long. The noble lord (Castlereagh) had said, that if his wish had been to overturn the present government, the mode he should have taken would be to hold his tongue, and let them carry their own measures in such a way as must completely disgust the country. He believed, however, that that sort of hostility was not much dreaded by His Majesty's ministers, and that they would be better pleased that those gentlemen should hold their tongues, than that they should misrepresent, and endeavor to inflame the country by those misrepresentations. He believed that it would hardly be contended that there was a single parish in England that had raised its quota of men in obedience to the law; and, therefore, when the learned gentleman spoke so much of the dignity of parliament requiring that the laws should be obeyed, he should have recollected that the parishes which violated the law, were those who raised men contrary to the provisions of the act, and the parishes that did not violate the law were those who raised no men. In Leicestershire, it appeared, there was a wholesale crimp, by whose assistance that county procured its quota. There appearing

to be some difference of opinion on this subject, between two representatives of that country, it had been stated, in the course of the debate on a former night, that one of them did not reside in the country he represented, and that probably his constituents would remember that on the next general election. He must compliment the constituents of the right honorable gentleman who made the observation for his residence among them. He wished, however, to know whether he had ever seen the place he represented (Tralee in Ireland), or whether he knew the name of one of his constituents? When it was seen, that in some districts a considerable number of men had been got, and in other none at all, it was impossible to suppose, that it was because there was a great deal of loyalty and zeal in one parish, or district, and none in that which immediately adjoined it. The reason was very different. In some cases it was represented as necessary, in order to support the characters of the ministers who brought in the bill, that some men should be got, and for that reason exertions were made to procure them, by means that were contrary to the law. In the parish of Marylebone, the same crimp offered his services who had raised men for other parishes, but his offer was refused, as that parish did not wish to violate the law. In St. Anne's parish, however, they were not so nice, and they got some men. [He then read the advertisement of the parish of St. Anne, which began with "The largest bounty in England for recruits," and ended with the following postscript, "No *Irishmen*, Germans, or boys, will be taken."] In St. Luke's also, they raised some men, by adding 12*l.* to the government bounty. As to getting men at the bounties fixed by government, it was impossible. If government were to want a levy of cavalry horses, and would allow no more than 5 or 10*l.* to be given for them, the parishes might answer, that it would

be as easy for them to raise as many *elephants, rhinoceroses*, or any other strange animals, as to get good horses for such a price. It was the same thing in the case of the recruits. There was an utter impossibility of procuring them for the bounties stated in the act. He felt convinced that the right honorable framer of the bill would not (if he were now living) support the bill. When he himself moved for the repeal of it last session, that right hon. gentleman expressly stated, that if upon trial it failed to produce the men, he should himself move for the repeal of it. The act had completely failed, and in order to give the appearance of its having partially succeeded, scandalous measures were resorted to by the government. He considered the letter of Lord Hawkesbury, of the 31st December, as a most atrocious act, which the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) would never have consented to. That letter of instruction allowed the men to be raised contrary to law, and gave the recruiting serjeants a privilege to libel the regular army, and point out this additional force as much more eligible to enlist in. As the right hon. and learned gentleman (Mr. Perceval) had suggested a form for acts of parliament to run, he also should name a title which would have been more fitting for the additional force act than that which it had been. It should rather have been called, an act "for degrading the magistracy of the country, for raising the bounties, perverting the public morals, destroying the regular army, and encouraging mutiny and desertion." Such an act should be immediately repealed as a great evil. If he saw a person afflicted with a wen, or a strangury, or any other disorder, and spoke of curing him, he did not think he could fairly be asked, what other disorder he proposed to substitute in its place? Or if he were to see a mad dog in the street, he should conceive himself justified in killing it, without providing any substitute for it, and this was precisely his

feeling with respect to the present bill. The famous letter of Lord Hawkesbury began by stating, "Whereas information has been received that the additional force bill has generally failed, on account of the negligence and supineness of the parish officers." He had read all the correspondence on the subject, and he would venture to say, that the Earl of Essex was the only person who gave such information. The letter, therefore, began with a violation of truth (in saying violation of truth, he did not allude to the noble lord personally, but to the act of the government), and proceeded to order the violation of the law by increasing the bounties. Colonel Campbell, who acted under the directions of the secretary of state, gave notice, that there was no occasion for being very nice in the manner the men were raised, so they were got. It was also a subject worthy of serious observation, that by the law the recruit was obliged to take an oath, that he was a native of the parish or district for which he served. Now in the manner those recruits were raised in distant parts of the country, it was necessary that perjury should be added to a violation of the law before such recruits could be received. He then concluded by utterly denying that he or his honorable friends acted at all through hatred of the memory of the great and illustrious man who framed the bill. "As for me (said Mr. S.), there were many who flattered him more than I, and some who feared him more; but there was no man who had a higher respect for his transcendant talents, his matchless eloquence, and the greatness of his soul; and yet it has been often my fate to have opposed his measures. I may have considered that there was somewhat too much of loftiness in his mind which could not bend to advice, or scarcely bear co-operation. I might have considered, that as a statesman his measures were not adequate to the situation of the country in the present times, but I always thought his purpose and his hope was

for the greatness and security of the empire. Let not his friends then suppose they are dealing fairly with the house, in representing that we seek a triumph over the memory of that illustrious man, when we now move the repeal of a measure, which he would himself have repealed if he had lived. A right honorable gentleman (Mr. Wilberforce), who had many opportunities of knowing his intentions, has told you that he intended to repeal it if it failed in getting men. It has failed. Let the failure of the measure he buried in his grave, and never remembered in his epitaph."

JULY 11.

THANKS TO THE VOLUNTEERS.

Sir Henry Mildmay moved the thanks. Lord Ossulton the previous question.

Mr. SHERIDAN—Although I could not have remained wholly silent during this debate, yet I wished to have heard the sentiments of others before I delivered my opinion; but what has fallen from two honorable gentlemen who have recently spoken, has induced me to abandon my original design, and to avail myself of this opportunity to solicit the attention of the house. I am desirous to abstain from all party allusions, and never wish to censure those who, from early attachment, and long habit, feel a peculiar ardor of affection for the late right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt); but whether the right honorable general belongs to that number, I will not pretend to determine. I think that gallant officer was not perfectly correct, when he ascribed the impassioned exclamation of the late minister to his regret that the affairs of the empire should be consigned to the present servants of the crown: that eminent person, no doubt, fully expected that his own companions in office would remain in power,

and under this painful reflection, his anxiety for his country is fully explained; for what would have become of it in such hands is sufficiently obvious. I have not yet expressed my views of this military subject; but it may easily be expected of me to declare, that the defence of the kingdom ought not to be entrusted exclusively to a regular army, and history has instructed us that there never was a country which preserved its liberties that exposed itself to this danger; nor, Sir, would I, on any occasion, give my vote to deduct one man from the great constitutional force—the militia. Acting under the influence of similar principles, I have always resisted the compulsory bills, stating it to be the undoubted prerogative of His Majesty to select any individuals from the great body of the community, to place them in the ranks of the regular army, and to send them to any part of the kingdom. It is true the judges and some public officers were excepted, but the whole of such a bill should become a dead letter. It is not necessary that I should now state my opinion on that subject; but I wish distinctly to be understood, that with regard to the volunteers I never shall vary my sentiments. I did before move the thanks of the house to that meritorious body, and in so doing, I gave them a pledge of the spirit in which I would support their interest, character, and dignity. If, Sir, they deserved this mark of public feeling, merely for the promptitude with which they stept forward for the defence of the state. how much higher are their claims to merit, when they have done that service which they then only intimated a disposition to perform! With respect to the drill serjeants, and some other minor matters of regulation, it may be eligible to leave these in the care to which such subjects are officially committed. But I think the reports of the military inspectors have been treated with a degree of levity which is neither candid or decent. Are we to say, that the general officers are charge-

able with misrepresentation, in order to deceive government, to lull ministers into a consciousness of security which is fallacious; or are we to presume that, as honorable men, as gentlemen, and officers, they do render the accounts now upon your table? If these be accurate, ought the volunteers to be undervalued? Sir, it is a fact most notorious, that nothing made so strong an impression on the French government during their hostile designs upon this country, as the energy manifested by the volunteers: the effect was equally felt by Buonaparte and his minister Talleyrand: they saw with mortification, that the nation would be indebted for its independence to its own valor. The people of England did not prostrate themselves and petition the sovereign, 'O king, hire us an army, and we shall be protected;' but they took the weapon into their own hands, to wield it in their own cause. I fairly say, that as the motion is now worded, I cannot vote for it. I shall therefore, before I sit down, submit to the house a middle proposition, not liable to the same objections with the original proposition. What were the motives of the honorable gentleman in the form in which they have shaped this motion, I would not prejudge; but they may very correctly be ascertained by the spirit in which they receive the variation I shall suggest.

What were the motives of the honorable gentleman in the form in which they have shaped this motion, I would not prejudge; but they may very correctly be ascertained by the spirit in which they receive the variations I shall suggest. The passage to which I object is retrospective; the language is, 'it is necessary now to declare;' why is it 'necessary now,' unless something has been done indicative of a different temper to that which the motion is intended to exhibit? Is it admitted on all sides, that if my right honorable friend (Mr. Windham) has intimated any thing at all injurious to the volunteers, it is confined to mere expressions. In his acts (*A cry*

of hear hear! occasioned some pause): in his acts I repeat, it is admitted on all sides by those who have spoken (and those who only tell me their sentiments by this sort of clamor, it is not possible I should understand), he has done nothing which can justly be deemed prejudicial. But has no dexterity been employed to pervert his meaning?—Have no artifices been resorted to, to proclaim what gentlemen on the other side would effect to suppress and to conceal? Sir, I will frankly confess, that formerly I have had differences with my right honorable friend on this subject. He, perhaps, in the heat of debate, and in the ebulition of wit, used stronger terms than his deliberate judgment would have employed; and possibly, having altered his situation, he is not disposed to shew, that this change has governed his opinions. I have these before me in review, when I observe that no enmity has been excited between the regulars and the volunteers, by the rank the latter have acquired; as far as my experience extends, they have treated each other with decorum and respect: if any superiority may be claimed by the officers of the line, the same sort of precedence may be demanded by the privates of the volunteers, so that there is a kind of balance which precludes discontent. The motion I should wish now to substitute, would be similar to another to which I have already referred: 'That the thanks of this house be given to the several corps of yoemanry and volunteers, from the promptitude and zeal with which they have stood forward for the defence of the country in the moment of public danger.' This motion was acceded to without a dissentient voice; and I am not aware how those who concurred in that proposition, can consistently, resist that which I shall presently recommend. It has been said, that rumours are abroad that the government designs to discourage the volunteers: these vague reports, however, met by a distinct avowal by my right honorable friend, that the measure to which he has

resorted will increase and cannot diminish their numbers. Whether the training bill is calculated to have this beneficial effect, it is not my present business to enquire: but, be they just, or incorrect, rumors have prevailed, and an idea has gone forth, that administration is unfriendly to the volunteer system; and no more successful means can be employed to prevent any misconstruction with regard to the intentions of ministers and parliament, than a vote of thanks, couched in terms expressive of the sense entertained of the important services of the volunteers. Again they say, why do you not thank the navy and army as well as the volunteers? Sir, the army and navy cannot be insensible of the estimation in which they are held by this house, and by the country in general: and they are sufficiently and properly convinced of their own importance; they know we cannot dispense with the protection they afford. The volunteers are not so firmly persuaded, that they receive the applause they deserve, and perhaps, they feel too diffident an opinion of their own utility. Besides, the army and navy cannot disband themselves at pleasure; the volunteers may, from some real or supposed provocation; and this is the serious evil I am most solicitous to avoid: by the vote I have proposed, all misunderstanding will be prevented. From these considerations I am very desirous that the honorable member should withdraw his motion. I think he must see that the effect of it, in its present shape, must be to attach a stigma on ministers; and what is yet more objectionable, on the house itself, for the legislative regulations it has already adopted, applicable to the military system. If the intention be purely, simply, and honestly to impart to the volunteers a conviction of the favorable sentiments of this house towards them, let them present the motion in a point of view which will induce this side of the house to concur with them; if under this ostensible design they have other concealed motives, it will be in vain

to expect this uniformity. So little do I disapprove of the general character of the motion, that I should have been happy to have seen it introduced as a preamble to one of the bills of military regulation, brought in by my honorable friend (Mr. Windham.) Perhaps the style adopted when the thanks of the house were voted to Sir Charles Gray and Sir John Jervis, on the 20th of May, 1794, would not be objectionable, "This house continues to retain a cordial sense of the zeal and spirit of the yeomanry and volunteers." Whatever may be the result of the proceedings of this night, I will confidently assert, that in any former period in the history of this country, there never was a body of men who deserved more the gratitude of the nation, who merited more highly its love, respect and veneration; and nothing can be more becoming the house of commons, than by a solemn act to record this effusion of public sentiment.

For the previous question 69; *against it* 39.

FEBRUARY 20, 1807.

WESTMINSTER ELECTION.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose, pursuant to notice, to move that the order for the appointment of a committee to consider the petition upon this subject should be discharged, with a view to move for the further postponement. The right honorable gentleman was so much of opinion, from what had passed when last this question was before the house, that a motion for further postponement would be immediately assented to if required, that he confessed he heard with considerable surprise of the intention to oppose the motion, particularly on the part of the noble lord (Folkstone), by whom a similar proposition was last submitted to the house. Had he happened to have stood in the predicament of being

unable to bring forward such a motion, he really thought that the noble lord would have been ready to propose it himself: at least he felt that he would be warranted, from the noble lord's former language and conduct, in relying upon his readiness to second him in this proposition. Of the grounds of this reliance, and the justice of his opinion, the house would be able to judge from a short review of the history of the case. When the petition before the house was presented, which was about the 23d of December, the first or second day after any petitions could be received, the noble lord announced the desire of the petitioners that the earliest day possible should be appointed for the ballot, and that they were ready at once to go before a committee. Accordingly the 30th of January was appointed: but, notwithstanding the declaration of the noble lord, and the publicly proclaimed resolution of the petitioners, he received, not many days afterwards, a note from the noble lord, stating, that it was thought a mistake he presented the petition so soon, and that the parties were not ready to go into the investigation on the day originally appointed. The noble lord, therefore, requested his consent to a further postponement, as a matter of personal accommodation to himself, and a matter of justice towards the petitioners, who would otherwise suffer through his error. Having had an acquaintance with the noble lord, he was certainly disposed to accommodate him, but yet he felt himself bound, before he complied with the noble lord's request, to consult the opinion of his friends, and they decidedly objected to the delay required. However, when he came down to the house upon the day appointed for the motion, the noble lord applied to him again; and again asking his consent to the motion as a personal favor, he did grant it. So far as he had gone, he believed the noble lord could not say, that what he had stated was not strictly true. But as to the conversation which took place the day the noble lord's

motion of postponement was agreed to, he held in his hand a document which contained it. He knew that he could not distinctly allude to the evidence he had adduced, because, according to the orders of that house, strangers were understood to be excluded. But somehow a memorandum of what was said on the day alluded to, did find its way into print, and certainly it was detailed with considerable accuracy. In looking over this memorandum, it would be seen that all the arguments advanced by the noble lord made against his motion, and of course it was a very natural inference that the motion owed its success to something else. That something was his concurrence—and he recollected very well, as it appeared from this memorandum, that he mentioned at the time of his apprehension that the 24th of February would go too near the circuits, which would render a farther postponement necessary, as his counsel would be out of town. Such was his statement then, and it was only upon the express condition that farther delay would be acceded to if necessary, that he gave his assent to the noble lord's motion. This he could aver from his own memory, but there were not less than twenty or thirty gentlemen present, who also heard the noble lord, and who could bear testimony to the noble lord's observation. The noble lord did state upon that occasion, that when he mentioned the 24th of February, he was not aware that the circuits were so near, and that if that day should in consequence become inconvenient, there could be no objection to a farther postponement. This declaration the noble lord was understood to have made by several friends near him. The house, he had no doubt, would agree with him in thinking, that when the petitioners urged the noble lord to move for the former postponement, on the ground that they did not wish for the trial on an early day, that the noble lord was not aware of the resolution relative to a speedy trial, which these petitioners had just before published,

and in all probability the noble lord was equally unaware of this circumstance, that the counsel for the petitioners did not go any circuit, while those retained on his part did. But of this the petitioners were fully apprised, and they would fain urge him to trial without the advantage of his counsel. It might be asked, why he did not make this proposition of postponement somewhat sooner. He would candidly answer, because, as he stated before, when this subject was under consideration, he really did not think the petition would be persisted in, but from what he had heard of their proceedings within the last few weeks, he was led to believe that his opponents were much more sanguine, even than he suspected, and that they were resolved to persevere. Upon the whole, however, the right honorable gentleman could not persuade himself to suppose that that house would call on any gentleman to enter upon such an important investigation stripped of the aid of his counsel; and he could not help observing that the attempt to take advantage of him in this instance, was not a very liberal return for the manner in which he gave way to the noble lord's motion upon a former occasion. But his manner of acting towards the noble lord and his friends in this transaction was, that which perhaps few men would be ready to imitate.

Ayes 162; *noes* 12.

MARCH 17.

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY.

Lord Percy moved for leave to bring in a bill for the gradual abolition of slavery in the West Indies.

Mr. SHERIDAN having anxiously expected that the bill passed the preceding night was the preamble of the ultimate measure of emancipation, thought that he should be guilty of the grossest inconsistency in giving a silent vote on the present question. With these sentiments he need scarcely say, that

the noble earl had his thanks for having directed the attention of the house to this important subject, even at that early period. The noble earl's statement had been misrepresented. He had never proposed to enfranchise the living negroes; his measure, as he understood him, was to commence with infants born after a period, which would remain a matter of future parliamentary discussion. The planters were entitled to fair dealing on this subject. If the house meant to say, that by abolishing the slave trade they had done all that duty demanded, and that they would leave the emancipation of the slaves to the hazard of fortuitous circumstances, let them be explicit, and say so; but if there lurked in any man's mind a secret desire to proceed in that business, a secret conviction that more ought to be done than had been done, it was unmanly, it was dishonorable, not to speak out. For one he would boldly declare that he had further views; he hoped that the young nobleman who had done his feelings so much credit, by the proposition which he had that evening made, would stand to his ground. If he persevered in the pursuit of his object with the same zeal as his right honorable friend opposite had done, he had no doubt that he would meet with the same success. An honorable baronet had talked of a cloven foot; he pleaded guilty to the cloven foot, but he would say that of the man who expressed pleasure at the hope of seeing so large a portion of the human race freed from the shackles of tyranny; it ought rather to be said, that he had displayed the pennon of an angel than the cloven foot of a demon. It was true no immediate connection existed between the abolition of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery, but the same feelings must be roused by the consideration of both questions; and he who detested the one practice must also detest the other. He did not like to hear the term property applied to the subjects of a free country. Could man become the property of man?

A colony emancipating from the free constitution of England must carry with it the principles of that constitution, and could no more shake off its well known allegiance to the constitution than it could shake off its allegiance to the sovereign. He trusted that the planters might be induced to lead the way on the subject of emancipation; but he cautioned the house against being too sanguine on this subject. Were the planters themselves always resident on the islands, he should have greater hopes; but it was not probable that because cargoes of human misery were no longer to be landed on their shores, that because their eyes were to be no longer glutted with the sight of human suffering, or their ears pierced with the cries of human distraction in any further importation of negroes, that the slave-drivers would soon forget their fixed habits of brutality, and learn to treat the unhappy wretches in their charge with clemency and compassion. Slavery would not wear itself out; it would become more rigid, unless the legislature became more vigilant, and reminded the planters of the new duty that had fallen upon them, of rearing the young slaves in such a manner, that they might be worthy of freedom. Adverting to the quotation from Gibbon, he contended, that the slavery of the West Indies was unlike any other slavery; it was peculiarly unlike the slavery of antient days, when the slaves frequently attained to the highest dignities; Esop, Terence, and Seneca were slaves. Was there a possibility that any of the unfortunate negroes now in the West Indies should emulate such men? It might be dangerous to give freedom to the slaves in a mass, but that it was not dangerous to give it to them in detail, was sufficiently proved by a little pamphlet that had been put into his hands the preceding night, in which it was stated, that a Mr. David Barclay, to his eternal honor be it spoken, who had himself been a slave-owner in Jamaica, and who, regretting that he had been so, on a bequest of slaves

being made to him, emancipated them, caused them to be conveyed to Pennsylvania, where they were properly instructed, and where their subsequent exemplary conduct was the general theme of admiration. With this fact before him, should he be told that he must give up all hope of abolishing slavery! No, he would never give it up. He would exclaim with the poet, in the words of the motto of the pamphlet which he had mentioned,

"I would not have a slave to till my ground,
"To fan me when I sleep, and tremble when
"I wake, for all that human sinews bought
"And sold, have ever earn'd."

Sir C. Pole moved that the house be counted, and only 35 *members being present it was adjourned.*

MARCH 18.

WESTMINSTER ELECTION.

Lord H. Petty moved, that the Westminster Petition be now taken into consideration.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose and said, that he was aware that standing in the situation he did, he was entitled to comment, to remark on, and to sum up, all the evidence that had been adduced in support of the allegations contained in the petition now before the house; he should, however wave that right, the evidence was in the hands of every member of that house, and he was not anxious, if he could do so, to add to the impression testimony of such a nature must have already produced; he would content himself with one remark which was, that that evidence, weak and futile as it was, did not say more to its own confusion than would have been proved by witnesses unimpeachable, which he, (Mr. Sheridan) had the house thought it necessary, was ready to bring forward. As an instance, he should mention merely Mr. Weatherhead himself. When an inquiry was made as to his services in the navy, he

confessed himself not quite satisfied with the return of the navy office. A noble lord (Folkestone), was equally dissatisfied, but upon different grounds. The noble lord seemed to think that this Mr. Weatherhead had been calumniated, and accordingly the noble lord moved for a return at once more exact and comprehensive. What had been the issue of this attempt to rescue the character of this Mr. Weatherhead from this supposed slander? Why, in truth, no more than this: that he, Mr. Weatherhead, had not served in one ship only, but in twelve or thirteen, that he had continued in one a year, in another ship three months, in a third a month, in a fourth three weeks, and in a fifth *five days;* running, as it were, the gauntlet of the British navy; for it appeared that he had been actually guilty of desertion from each ship, though in the first return it appeared that he had deserted but once. But it was not more difficult to fix the station of this naval officer to a certain ship, than to fix his birth to a certain place; he had the singular good fortune to be born at a number of different places (*A laugh*); he was *first* at Newcastle, he was born at Morpeth, and after some other birth he was *brought forth* in London (*A loud laugh*). But there was another slight ground of objection to the character of this witness; in the month of September, 1803, he petitioned to be examined for a lieutenancy, and to the recommendatory certificate of the different captains under whom he served, there was but one objection, namely, that they were all discovered to be *forgeries.* He was not anxious to press upon the house the gross and flagrant contradictions and absurdities in the evidence they had heard; he did not wish to expose the miserable wretches to the just rigor of the honest indignation they had so universally excited; but he would put it to the feelings of that house, whether it was not necessary to inquire how far those wretches had been the tools of a conspiracy; how far it was the duty of any agent or agents

to inquire into the nature of the testimony and the *character* of the witnesses, more especially in a case where this evidence went directly to affect the seat of a member of parliament, to mention nothing of the danger or propagating groundless slander against a privy counsellor. It was for the house to consider how far the agents are responsible for employing wretches as substantial evidence, whose character they might have learned (had they been ignorant of it) in the neighbourhood of Bow-street, Hatton-garden, and Newgate; but he should abstain, he would keep his word with the house and not enter into any remark upon the evidence. He had an idea of submitting some motion for the purpose of investigating the charge of conspiracy; he should, however, in compliance with the suggestions of those right honorable friends, whose superior judgment was with him decisive, give way, and should now through a sense of delicacy retire, leaving his cause with confidence to the house, assured as he was, that the house would with becoming dignity assert its own character and honor, in doing so, preserve his.

Mr. Sheridan immediately withdrew.

AUGUST 7, 1807.

THIRD READING OF IRISH ARMS BILL.

Mr. SHERIDAN declared it was a matter of astonishment to hear the question called for by something like a general voice. He had noticed the motion of his honorable friend, and the ability with which he had supported it, and he had noticed most attentively the eloquent and unanswerable arguments of his honorable and learned friend (Sir A. Pigot), and many other honorable gentlemen; he certainly did think, that something would have been said in answer to them; he certainly did think that something like an answer would have been at-

tempted; he certainly did think that gentlemen on the other side would have condescended to have said something in favor of their own measure, after it had been overwhelmed almost with such a torrent of argument. But if ever Ireland was at once injured and insulted, it was that night; he conceived the silence of ministers on this occasion to be an injustice to the measure itself, whilst it evinced a total disregard of the gentlemen who spoke upon the subject, and through them insulted and outraged the feelings of the people of Ireland. The gentlemen who spoke upon the subject, pleaded the cause of the injured constitution of Ireland. They pleaded that cause in the most moderate and persuasive terms, and yet the most sullen silence prevailed throughout the whole body of His Majesty's ministers; they gave a blank instead of argument. Even on the introduction of the bill, when it was unavoidable to say something in support of the measure, the Attorney-General did not pretend to say, that he knew any thing of the existence of any facts, the existence of which was necessary to justify the adoption of such a measure; no, but he had heard something by rumor somewhere, about the existence of some such circumstances. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was equally ignorant, but he had also heard of something that he believed had a strong tendency to resemble insurrection. Then, with respect to the bill itself, when he looked at it, compared it with that which had lately passed the house, he must say that if the former seemed odious in its form and substance, this was ten thousand times more so, it was really most abominable. But at the same time, as if it were meant to make the measure both odious and ridiculous, it was so constructed, as that it would plunder the people of their arms, and put down the trade of a blacksmith. Nothing like a blacksmith was to exist in Ireland, lest he might possibly form something like a pike. If ever there was an instance in which the liberties of a loyal peo-

ple were taken from them, and they were thereby tempted to become disloyal, it was the present. Indeed, from the general spirit with which the bill was framed, he thought there was something still wanting, and he should propose to add a clause by way of rider to this bill, making it high treason for any man to communicate either of these bills to Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French, lest he should conceive them to be direct invitations to him to visit that part of his Majesty's empire. He had already noticed the silence of the gentlemen opposite him; but if they should now think proper to drop a word or two, when he considered the high political character, the extraordinary virtue, and the vastly extensive powers of argument of those gentlemen, he should think himself highly honored indeed, if they should design to take the most trifling notice of any thing that fell from him. He now happened to recollect what was said by a right honorable gentleman, to whose opinions they all deferred (Mr. Grattan), that notwithstanding he voted for the present measure with all its defects, rather than lose it altogether, yet that gentleman said, that he hoped to secure the reversionary interest of the constitution to Ireland. But when we saw that the constitution was suspended from the year 1796 to the present period, and that it was now likely to be continued for three years longer, the danger was that we might lose the interest altogether; when we were mortgaged for such a length of time, at last a foreclosure might take place. But what had been done for the protection of Ireland? an experienced military officer, the Secretary of State for that country, had been sent up the Baltic. (The Chancellor of the Exchequer said, across the table, no, secretary to the lord lieutenant.) Mr. Sheridan then said, he felt himself highly honored indeed by that correction of a supposed error. If the right honorable gentlemen meant to say, that the worthy baronet (Sir A. Wellesley) was too insignificant, he would

defend the honorable baronet against the imputation of that right honorable gentleman. The baronet was secretary to the representative of His Majesty, and a military man; he was sent up the Baltic, and you garrisoned Ireland with two arbitrary acts of Parliament.

AUGUST 8.

PUBLICANS' BILL.

Mr. SHERIDAN moved the second reading of this bill. He could adduce, he said, instances of the most atrocious oppression practised by the magistrates on individuals of this trade; he did not say designedly, but from carelessness and inattention. All that he wished was, that, when a publican was charged with an act which was to be esteemed sufficient to deprive him of his license, he should be informed of the nature of the crime imputed to him, and should be heard in his defence; not that he and his family should be deprived of their livelihood by a whisper. This, he maintained, was not a situation in which an Englishman should be placed. It had, he believed, been objected against him (Mr. Sheridan), that this was the mode he had taken of canvassing Westminster. How truly this was alleged might be gathered from this simple fact, that one of the first measures moved by him in parliament was of a similar nature. Shortly after the riots in 1780, he himself originated a measure against the Westminster justices, in which he had the satisfaction of being supported by a most respectable minority. Shortly after this, the late Duke of Northumberland put an additional number of gentlemen into the commission of the peace, among the rest himself (Mr. Sheridan). General Fitzpatrick, Lord R. Spencer, and other gentlemen on that side of the house, finding, during the immediately succeeding election for Westminster, that

the publicans, through fear of the magistrates, all of whom were in the interest of government, could not be induced to open any houses in favor of Mr. Fox, though they had not previously been qualified themselves as magistrates, they resolved to do so, and immediately advertised, promising their protection to such publicans as should act impartially by opening their houses for the independent candidate. In this determination they could only find one of the existing magistrates who would join them, and add his name to their corps—*(a laugh from the ministerial benches.)* Gentlemen, Mr. Sheridan remarked, might, if they pleased, think it a subject of congratulation, and that it conferred honor and respectability on the magistracy of Westminster, that not more than one man could be found among them to add his name to a resolution expressive of their determination to act fairly and impartially. He had only stated this, however, to shew that the present was not an idea which he had now taken up for the first time. He had prepared a bill on the subject while he was treasurer of the navy; and so far was it from being an election trick on his part, that he did not mention the subject during the last election till the 12th day of the poll, whereas, had he meant it as a theme through which to court popularity, he would have set out with it from beginning. If it was desired, he should be ready in the committee to go into a string of cases, the substantiating of any one of which he was convinced, must render it impossible for gentlemen of honor, feeling, or humanity, to doubt on the propriety of what he proposed. He proceeded to state the case of a woman, whose father and mother had been for sixty years in one house, in which they had uniformly maintained an unblemished character. She had succeeded to her parents, and supported in it, with the same propriety, a family of seven children, five of whom were entirely dependent on her industry. Being summoned before the magistrates, and informed that they could not

new her licence; on her attempting to remonstrate, the only satisfaction she could procure was "woman, you have had your answer." Her licence was accordingly withdrawn, and she and her family were now reduced to a state of extreme poverty and distress. This case was not unknown to, and had attracted the commiseration of a noble lord and right honorable gentleman; but he (Mr. Sheridan) denied that it was consistent with the constitution of this country that any man, in any profession, was to be told, that at the discretion of any one man, he and his family were to be deprived of their livelihood, and reduced to misery. He had, he declared, thirty instances of a similar kind, which he should, if required, bring forward in the committee. He had several instances too, of persons having been deprived of their licences for voting for Sir Francis Burdett, for Middlesex: they had even been told that this was the reason; and, he would ask, were publicans at the will of a magistrate, to be deprived of the free exercise of the elective franchise more than the other inhabitants of this country? He alluded to another case which had occurred at Fulham, where a house, remarkable for the usual decorum of its keeper, had been deprived of the licence, merely because on one occasion, a few Welsh girls returning to their own country, had been indulged with a fiddle and a hobble. These were arbitrary powers, which, he submitted, were not fit to rest with one or two individuals, without the person accused being acquainted with the charge against him, and allowed to defend himself. Neither, he maintained, was it even then fit that they should exist without appeal. All he asked was, that every person so accused should have the charge against him furnished to him in writing, and that he should be heard in his defence; and, afterwards, that he should have it in his power to appeal to the quarter sessions. He could not think it possible but that the magistrates themselves must be pleased that an

appeal lay from their decision. If not actuated by personal motives, the knowledge of such appeal must be consolatory to their feelings: all he wished at present was, that the bill should extend to Middlesex and Surrey. He confessed that he had received letters which would do more than cover the table, containing similar complaints from every part of the country, so that he might be fortified in maintaining that the alteration should extend throughout. But still, high as was the respect in which he held Mr. Graham, and one or two others of the Westminster and Middlesex magistrates, he could not so far shut his eyes as to put them on a level with the independant country magistrates. The former held their places, for which they received an emolument, at the will and pleasure of His Majesty's Ministers; while the latter exercised a gratuitous and burdensome duty. There was another subject, which he had alluded to elsewhere, and before an auditory far more numerous than that which he had now the honor to address, namely, the power exercised by brewers over publicans, by being proprietors of public houses, &c. With all the regard which he felt for many gentlemen connected in the brewing business, this was a practice which he was aware, ought to be checked, if not abolished. Nothing was more clear than this, that brewers might meet together, agree that they would not interfere with the houses which were held under the dominion of each; and in the manner they had it in their power to impose whatever trash they pleased on the poor —an expression which he did not like in the acceptation in which it was frequently received—more properly, on the laborious part of the community. What they had after labor was of as much consequence to their health, and to their existence, as food. It was, therefore, an object well deserving the interference of the legislature, to see that improper means were not resorted to, to disappoint them of it. The period of the session, however, would

not allow time for so extensive a regulation. All that he now desired was to provide that a man, merely because he was a publican, should not be ruined, and his family turned on the parish, without having an opportunity of knowing what was charged against him. He concluded by moving, that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr. Moore recommended, as more enquiry seemed necessary, that the bill should be withdrawn, rather than let it go to a division.

Mr. Sheridan professed his disposition to yield to whatever appeared to be the general wish of the house, and therefore he should comply with the request of his honorable friend (Mr. Moore) to any suggestion from whom he should be always happy to attend. At the same time he could not help noticing the surprise expressed by the right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer), that he should have brought forward this bill at so late a period of the session. What, said Mr. Sheridan, the right honorable gentleman, who has surprised the house and the country so much himself; he who has surprised the house at a late period of the session with his plan of government for Ireland; who has surprised it with his new military project; who has surprised it by proposing to suspend that highly laudable and universally praised system, the plan of enlisting for a limited time. And yet, that after all the right honorable gentleman should talk to me of surprising the house. But among all his surprises there was one surprise which he could not produce, namely, that of surprising him (Mr. S.) by opposing this bill; for he suspected it.

The right honorable gentleman proceeded to state the manner in which he had acted with a view to produce a satisfactory bill. First, he drew up a bill such as some gentlemen now professed to wish for, combining the case of brewers owning public houses with that before the house respectively; but then objections arose, to which he yielded, in proposing to make those the objects of separate bills.

Again he proposed to make the bill general; but to this very great difficulties were suggested; he found many men, and magistrates particularly, who were willing to let him do what he pleased with Middlesex and Surrey, provided he let the remainder of the county alone. He therefore endeavored to make a beginning of that reform in those counties, which so many gentleman have professed to desire to extend to all England. But a committee of inquiry was required previous to the introduction of such a bill as this. He, however, would beg those who desired such a committee, to reflect upon the expense and trouble that must attend such a committee; to consider if witnesses were to be summoned from all parts of England and Wales, what time such a committee must last, and when it was likely to end? Each case would, in fact, be a suit before the committee, for he should propose to do that with regard to the magistrates, which they, under the existing law, declined to do towards the publicans; that is, he should have the magistrates apprized of any ground of complaint urged against them, and afforded the opportunity of vindicating themselves. What time, then, would such an investigation occupy? As to the cases he had adverted to upon this occasion, the right honorable gentleman stated, that they were but a few out of a large mass, and while gentlemen called for deliberation and delay, he could assure them and the house, that many persons were starving in jail in consequence of the law which he proposed to correct. There was one case in particular into which he believed a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Rose) had made inquiry, and which he knew was peculiarly oppressive, namely, that of Mrs. Unthank. The case of Mr. John Morris, a respectable man, who had a shop over the way in King Street, furnished the strongest grounds of complaint. This Mr. Morris, for whom, from his own knowledge of him, he could not hesitate to avow the

utmost respect, was deprived of his licence by the magistrates, merely because his house was to be taken down in order to make some coxcomical improvement about Westminster Abbey; to shew that building to the members as they came down to the house. But he had communicated the case of Mr. Morris to the Treasury, and he hoped for redress. There was also one with regard to a Mr. Bignall, of the Broadway, Westminster, whose license was withdrawn by the magistrates, upon grounds which they would not explain, and the poor man finding every effort to procure redress unavailing, absolutely died of a broken heart about a fortnight since, leaving a helpless family to deplore his fate. With such facts before him, he did not think it too much to propose this temperate measure. However, as the opinion was so strongly expressed, that if such a bill was necessary, it should be made general, he should acquiesce in the wish for time to inquire into the subject. He hoped and trusted, that by the next session petitions would pour in from all quarters, praying the removal of the existing grievances, and that such petitions would be presented by the highest authority, by that of the county representatives of the respective petitioners. For himself, he should for the present only say, that which was only a repetition of what he had said before, that while he had a seat in that house, he should ever be found an advocate of the weak against the strong, and of the helpless against those who had the power, and he was sorry to say too often the will, to oppress them.

The bill was withdrawn.

AUGUST 13.

STATE OF IRELAND.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose to make his promised motion, and spoke in substance as follows: I rise, Sir,

under some degree of apprehension that from the lateness of the hour, and the quantity of less important business which the house has already gone through, I may be felt to trespass on your attention; but it was, I assure you, not less my intention this night, than it was on Monday, to address you at a much earlier hour of the evening, had other business permitted. The lateness of the hour on Monday was indeed one of the causes which induced me to postpone my motion until this evening; and I cannot but regret that on this, the last day, nay the last hour of the session, it should become necessary for me to arrest your attention; because I know that at such a time to delay your sitting cannot be agreeable to your feelings or to your habits. I am aware that it must have somewhat of an ungracious appearance to postpone your separation at such a season; and believe me I am as willing to enjoy the benefits of that separation as any one among you; but I am too strongly impelled by a call of imperious duty to yield to any desire of accommodation. The necessity which gave rise to that call was not created by me; nor was the postponement of the proposition I am about to submit, from Monday to this late period, by any means my fault. The propriety of adopting it is to my conviction rendered perfectly obvious by the circumstances of the two bills which you have recently passed with regard to Ireland. When you have determined to suspend the constitution and laws of Ireland, is it not reasonable to propose to you some inquiry into the causes alleged for such suspension, and how far such causes are removeable; is it not wise, when you are sending such acts to Ireland, to communicate at the same time such assurances of your resolution to take the state of that country into your consideration? I am confident that such conduct would be at once consistent with policy and humanity, and that much of the apprehension and irritation which those acts of parliament may be naturally expected to produce,

would be mitigated if accompanied by the adoption of a motion of the nature of that which I hold in my hand.

With regard to the intentions entertained by the last administration, to propose two acts similar to those I allude to, or to the character of the persons to whom the execution of the extraordinary powers which these acts confer, might be intrusted by either the late or the present government, it is my intention to say very little indeed. Because I do not wish to touch upon any topic of irritation, I will not enter much into comparisons. My hope and desire is to obtain an unanimous assent to the motion, as unanimity is necessary to give it complete effect. I shall abstain cautiously from any thing that resembles invidious distinction. I know that to no set of men could power have been more safely confided than to the members of the late administration. I am sure that in the hands of none would power have been less liable to abuse; and whatever my disinclination to comparison may be, to them cannot be denied this just distinction, that power might have been granted to them with the less reluctance, as they manifested a disposition to accompany its existence by every means of concession and conciliation. When I reflect in whom the power of these acts was to have been invested in Ireland; when I consider that it was to have been exercised by the Duke of Bedford, who was not likely to call it into action, unless the necessity was irresistible, and who was in no case likely to abuse it, I must feel that he was peculiarly entitled to confidence. The character of that nobleman formed a guarantee against the apprehension of abused authority. But I have great respect for his successor also (the Duke of Richmond). I know that nobleman well enough, to be certain that he has no disposition to cruelty, that he has no malignant passion to gratify, and that he is above being affected by that gloomy suspicion, or party rancor, which might unnecessarily call for the

execution, and materially embitter the operation of such power as these acts ordain. I have no doubt that this nobleman will follow the wise example, will be actuated by the same liberal principles, which served to render his illustrious predecessor so much the object of panegyric and attachment. I should not, therefore, be very materially influenced as to a comparison of persons in power, as to my opinion of the manners and unconstitutional powers which characterise these bills. I am adverse to the principle of such measures, and could never be persuaded to accede to them, unless the necessity were strong and glaring indeed. Upon Monday last I had an opportunity of shewing my motion to several gentlemen on both sides of the house, and had the satisfaction of observing a general disposition to concur in its principle and object. But some gentlemen expressing a wish for time to consider its structure and tendency, I was therefore for postponing the motion until this day, influenced by the request of those who required such a time, in the hope that consideration would serve to remove their doubts and secure their support. In this opinion at least, I acquiesced in the proposed delay, that the effect of it would be to produce the proposition perhaps of some remedy for any defect in the motion, but that delay and deliberation must determine every man in favor of its main object. Retaining still a little of that hope and opinion I do not think it necessary to take up so much of your time, by entering into a detail of the reasons which have induced me to bring forward the motion, and which should urge you to adopt it. Indeed I cannot conceive a ground upon which the rejection of such a motion can be justified, and I am not bound to conjure up objections or anticipate arguments, upon the strength of which no reasoning man can rely. It is impossible that any thinking man should seriously insist upon as an objection to any motion, that which I have heard on other occasions, namely, that danger

was to be apprehended from the discussion of such affairs in this house; that it is a topic which ought to be touched as little and as seldom as possible. But I deprecate such a ground of opposition, as full of error and mischief. You conceive that until we get compl tely rid of the folly and fallacy of such an objection, it will be quite impossible for us to apply a remedy to the disorders of that country, and for this obvious reason, that we cannot know the nature of their disorders. What! that we should go on legislating for Ireland in the dark: that we should reject light and information upon a subject to which we a e called upon to apply the law, and that law too most penal and severe in its character!

When I hear the ministers of the crown declaring without shame, that they know nothing of the state of Ireland;—when I hear the same declaration from the law officers;—when, in fact, no man can speak decisively upon the subject, is it possible, I would ask, to devise a stronger argument than such declared ignorance suggests, to urge the united parliament to an investigation of this important question? It is not consistent with even the decent appearance of respect for the rights, interests, and liberties of the people of Ireland, to legislate for that country in such total ignorance, or at least, such inconsistent contradictory information as we have before us. We have heard one set of gentlemen assert that Ireland is perfectly tranquil, loyal, and united, and this assertion is corroborated by the authority of a noble lord (Hawkesbury) in the other house of parliament (*A cry of order from the chair*), then by a noble lord in another place; and with such authority before us, is it right that the constitution of Ireland should be suspended? But further in support of the allegation that Ireland is undisturbed, and requires not such an act. I find that in a very populous county, where disaffection was supposed to exist, I mean Tipperary, Judge Fox at the late assizes congratulated the people upon the

state of the calendar; upon the acknowledged tranquillity of the district, and upon the general good order of the county. I find that not a single charge of disloyalty, sedition, or treason, was to be seen on the calendar throughout the county. I find at Kilkenny the public resolutions of the grand jury, testifying, not only the peaceable disposition of the county, but a general and cordial harmony between protestants and catholics, with a strong declaration from a body of the former in favor of the claims of the latter. All these testimonies appear on the one side; on the other, to be sure, I hear a very high authority, an authority certainly of the highest character in my estimation, I mean the member for Dublin (Mr. Grattan.) I hold his authority high, because I respect, not only his talents and information, but his integrity; and I feel towards him as warmly as any resident of Ireland, the gratitude to which he is so eminently entitled, for obligations he has rendered to my country. Ministers, I perceive, are willing to ground their proceedings upon the authority of my right honorable friend: under his great name they would shelter the creation of enormous powers, for which there may be no necessity. At all events, with the information I have received both from public and private sources, I must contend that no necessity appears. Why, then, should we not enquire? My object is to awake the house to what I conceive, with deference, to be a just sense of its duty; to procure from it a pledge that an enquiry will be instituted, and thus to hold out to the people of Ireland some prospect of redress; some assurance of the friendly disposition of the legislature. That enquiry is necessary, no man can deny; and without full information, I must say, that it is not becoming in us to take such serious measures with regard to Ireland. We have, in fact, been legislating for that country upon hearsay and authority alone, and mark, with much more of hearsay and authority against, than for the cause you

have pursued. All this too while you have had the means of ample enquiry within your reach. Upon what grounds, then, do you shrink from that enquiry? It is preposterous to pretend that you fly from it because you apprehend danger from discussing the affairs of that country. The fact is, that no topic requires or deserves more of your discussion or investigation: so far from avoiding knowledge upon such a subject, it is highly culpable not to seek it. I profess myself as much in want of knowledge as other persons, and I take some blame to myself on that account; but I shall endeavor by all means in my power to obtain information, and it is with a view to remove my own defect upon this head, as well as the defects of others, that I wish for enquiry: I wish for enquiry because it is essential, as well in respect to our own character, as in justice to the people of Ireland. It is our duty to enquire upon such an occasion, and we should not shrink from that duty through any objection to the trouble that might attend it, or through any idle fear of danger; but least of all, through a timid apprehension of the truth. With regard to the motives that have urged me to stand forward upon this occasion, I have been prompted to it by duty and by feeling. My object is, to serve the cause of justice and my country, without exciting any passion, or flattering any prejudice. I hope I may take credit for being as little inclined as any man to the use of inflammatory language; as little disposed to promote sedition, or mutiny, or disaffection. For this I think I am entitled to take credit. There is not, perhaps, a man more strongly convinced than I am, that the very existence of the two islands depends upon the continuance of their connection. I am quite assured, that if there be any party in Ireland of any denomination, which would advocate an opposite principle, that party is decidedly hostile to the interests of that country; and should call forth the vigilance and vigour of the law. But I must say, that all

appearances are against the belief of any such disaffection, much less of organized treason: indeed, if I could imagine an observer totally free from prejudice upon the subject, his inference would, I am persuaded, be of quite an opposite tendency. If I could imagine a foreigner well disposed to Great Britain; if I could believe such a foreigner to exist, I am satisfied he would be forward rather to congratulate Great Britain upon the present state of Ireland. There are four symptoms of loyalty and attachment to Great Britain visible in Ireland, which would naturally attract the attention of this foreigner. Having heard that the Duke of Bedford was applied to by some rash individuals to proclaim a county, at the time of the insurrection of the thrashers, that noble duke rejected the application, and trusting to the ordinary operation of the law, put down the insurrection; the foreigner would, in the first instance, consider this a very good symptom of the disposition of Ireland. Well, in the second place, he would be told that there had been no disturbances whatever in that country, since the Duke of Bedford had put down the insurrection alluded to, and that the disposition of the people had been particularly proved by the rejection of the catholic bill. A short description of the nature of that measure would readily satisfy his mind, that the laying it aside, after it was promised, was very likely to have an irritating effect in Ireland: but instead of irritation, he would witness the most perfect good order, although all the ingredients of insurrection were flung among the people, under the wrapper of a proclamation for dissolving parliament. The third object of the foreigner's attention would be Judge Fox's address of congratulation to the people of Tipperary, upon the peaceful state of the county; together with that judge's expression of surprise, that it should be otherwise described by any person; and the fourth symptom would more than all satisfy his mind, that no apprehension whatever could be entertained of disorders or insurrec-

tion in Ireland. For he would see the army taken away; he would see that formidable body, the German Legion, which was sent to Ireland to save it from sedition, embarked for the continent. Now, if this foreigner were to state these sentiments to the minister, and express his surprise that any suspicion could any where be entertained of the loyalty and tranquillity of the people of Ireland; what would the right honorable gentleman say to him? Perhaps the right honorable gentleman would tell him that the Duke of Bedford acted injudiciously in refusing to proclaim a county under martial law, and restoring the peace by means of the common law of the land; that the circumstances of Ireland being understood for some time back, was mere matter of accident; that Judge Fox knew nothing at all about the state of the country. But would not the foreigner be apt to ask, why, if Ireland were in such a state of disaffection, the military force should be taken away from it, and two oppressive and arbitrary bills sent there, still more to irritate that disaffection? Perhaps the right honorable gentleman might say, that he relied more upon these bills for preserving Ireland, than he did upon a military force; and when he marched out an army, he would march in an act of parliament; and when he withdrew a legion, he would substitute a law. But above all, what was the foreigner likely to say to the right honorable gentleman, when he found, that while every endeavor was using to arm the English, the Irish were disarming? With such a remarkable contrast before him, would not the foreigner, would not any man interested for Great Britain, or possessing common sense, be disposed, particularly at a crisis when the invasion of a powerful enemy was to be apprehended, to put this plain question to the minister—If you take away the arms of the Irish, what are they to fight with? and if you take away their constitution, what are they to fight for? It has been said, that there exists a French

party in Ireland; but when was it that such a party did not exist in that country? Since the days of Elizabeth, from the very commencement of those foul and tyrannous measures which originated in national jealousy, political prejudice, or religious dissension, but particularly the latter, which drove catholics of high spirit from their native country, numbers of such exiles found an asylum in France, and hence a correspondence between them and their relations in Ireland, which naturally led to the creation of a French party in Ireland, and an Irish party in France. But the existence of such a party cannot for a moment be insisted upon as a justification for the oppressive laws it was quoted to support. For what policy could be more mischievous and inhuman, than a perseverance in the same persecuting measures which originally created that party? Let the state of Ireland be enquired into; let persecution and injustice be put an end to, and the French party will soon cease to exist. But I cannot admit the danger of such a party in a political point of view. The correspondence of family connection may exist altogether independent of national attachments and prejudices, and perhaps this talked-of French party may consist solely of mere family connection, abstracted from all political views. At all events there is no evidence upon the subject to direct the judgment of this house. There is, I must observe, a principle contained in the argument which the alleged existence of this party was adduced to support, that bears a most fearful character for Ireland indeed: for the Irish exiles having found an asylum in America, in Denmark, and other states, it would follow from the use made of this principle, that whenever Great Britain should be at war with either of these states, Ireland would be liable to have her constitution suspended, there being to be found an American and a Danish party in Ireland, as well as a French, and all arising from the same cause, which cause it is the tendency of

the bills I have objected to, to continue and increase. The cause of emigration and exile from Ireland has been considerably diminished under the auspices of our present most gracious sovereign; but still a great deal remains to be done to reconcile to their country the great body of the Irish. What has been done was no doubt calculated to do much good, but yet it is to be recollected, that there is a great deal in the manner of doing a thing: there is such a case as conferring a favor without obtaining any acknowledgment; of rendering a service without exciting any gratitude; and such a case may be as making concessions when it is too late. I recommend these considerations to the reflection of ministers. When they and others complain of the discontents of the Irish, they never appear to consider the cause. When they express their surprise that the Irish are not contented, while, according to their observation, that people have so much reason to be happy; they betray a total ignorance of their actual circumstances. The fact is, that the tyranny practised upon the Irish has been throughout unremitting. There has been no change but in the manner of inflicting it. They have had nothing but variety in oppression extending to all ranks and degrees of a certain description of the people. If you would know what this varied oppression consisted in, I refer you to the penal statutes you have repealed, and to some of those which still exist. There you will see the high and the low equally subjected to the lash of persecution; and still some effect to be astonished at the discontents of the Irish. But with all my reluctance to introduce any thing ludicrous upon so serious an occasion, I cannot help referring to a little story which those very astonished persons call to my mind. It was with respect to an Irish drummer, who was employed to inflict punishment upon a soldier. When the boy struck high, the poor soldier exclaimed: "Lower, bless you," with which the boy complied.

But soon after the soldier exclaimed: "Higher, if you please." But again he called out, "A little lower," upon which the accommodating boy addressed him—"Now, upon my conscience, I see you are a discontented man; for, strike where I may, there's no pleasing you." Now your complaint of the discontents of the Irish appears to me quite as rational, while you continue to strike, only altering the place of attack. As to the conduct which ought to be pursued with respect to Ireland, don't let it be imagined that I should not desire to have a strong armed force in that country. I would have such a force stationed there, much as I rely on the loyalty of the people. But this force should be the protectors and advocates of the people. It should not be placed there to act as executioners, but as a guard of honor upon the constitution, the liberty, and the property of the people. I should not wish to have the fate of Ireland entrusted to an inadequate force, particularly at a period when no one can tell the hour at which the enemy may arrive. I would wish to have such a force in Ireland as in every other quarter of the empire, as should assure our foreign enemy of the impossibility of success; and at the same time serve to discourage the operations of domestic enemies, by convincing them that it is in vain to hope; that his prospects and calculations were vain. With this view and object, I would have a large army in Ireland; and such an army would serve still more to render the bills I have referred to quite unnecessary. Because, if invasion or rebellion should take place, the peace of the country would be vested in the army. For it is a prerogative of the crown in such cases, to put the country under martial law, and in such cases only can martial law be necessary, particularly if you keep a large force in the country. The prerogative of the crown, then, is fully competent to meet any real danger, without these bills, which are, in fact, nothing but martial law in masquerade. As to the

plan of arming the people at large, which, it seems, is to be extended to Ireland; although the principle is so perfectly congenial with the spirit of the British constitution, for it is a part of the king's prerogative to compel the people to arm in case of invasion or rebellion. I contend that the policy of disarming the Irish is bad, even for the purpose that measure professes to have in view. For a people that are armed are generally, or almost always, more peaceable and less discontented, than those who are left defenceless and disarmed. If the king should, under his prerogative, call out the people of Ireland, or the sheriff were to summon the *posse comitatus*, in what state, I would ask, are that people likely to be found after the operation of those acts of parliament? It is, however, pretended that these acts are only to continue for a certain time; that they only involve a suspension of the constitution, in which the people have a reversionary interest. But I do not know when the suspension is to cease. It began in 1795, and since that it has continued without interruption, and the lease has just been renewed for three years longer. I am of opinion, that the people who can submit so long to such a measure, must be tolerably well prepared for slavery. Indeed it cannot be difficult to reconcile them to the loss of freedom. In renewing the loan to government of the Irish constitution, I remember that ministers would not attend to the advice of my right honorable friend (Mr. Grattan) as to the duration of the lease. No, where his authority suited their view, they adopted it, and took shelter under it, but where that authority was against them, they rejected it. But the right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer), has promised that the constitution shall be restored to Ireland. I should like to see a receipt and promise of return for a free constitution, from the hands of the right honorable gentleman. I dare say as a lawyer, a financier, and a statesman, it would be a curious production, run-

ning, perhaps, in these terms: "Whereas it has been deemed expedient for the peace and good of Ireland, for good and valuable considerations, to take the constitution of that country into the keeping of the crown. I, on the part of the crown, do promise and declare, that it shall be returned when it is deemed expedient." But suppose a project formed to withhold this constitution altogether; suppose it was resolved to establish absolute despotism, such as would justify the resistance of a free people; how is that resistance to be made, after the arms of the people have been taken away? What ministers ultimately mean to do with respect to Ireland, it is really difficult to divine. They promise, to be sure, to restore the constitution, and do many other things: but the people of Ireland know by whom the promise is made. They remember those who promised so much at the time of the union, and never kept their word in any one point; no, not one: indeed their conduct towards Ireland in this respect, puts me in mind of the promises made to children. The parent presents a favor to the view of the child; but declines to give it: no, no, the child would spoil it, and the parent keeps it for fear he should. Thus precisely are the people of Ireland trifled with as to promises; and thus are those promises fulfilled. How have they acted upon the subject of the catholic question? I am not now going into the discussion of that question; but was not the grant of that measure held out as one of the first consequences of the union? Such was to be collected from the words of several of the principal advocates of that measure, and, among others, even Dr. Duigenan. Mr. Pitt and the noble lord (Castlereagh) held out a hope, upon their retirement from office in 1801, that their return to office might be deemed the signal for catholic emancipation. But yet they returned to office, and no such grant was proposed. Was not the frequent disappointment of the catholic body, their hopes deferred, one

of the principle causes of the Irish discontents?—Here Mr. Sheridan entered into a review of the conduct of the several members of the present cabinet with respect to the catholic question, and contrasted those who formerly promised so much to the catholics, with those who had lately endeavored to put an eternal bar to their hope, and who raised the abominable yell of No Popery. There were some of the latter who were, no doubt, actuated by conscientious motives. He was most sincerely disposed to do credit to the motives of his Majesty, and had no doubt he was actuated by the purest precepts of conscience. In his honorable mind he was confident there existed as much abhorrence of the authors of any kind which could disunite and distract his subjects as any man in the nation could feel. He had no hesitation in saying, that those men who would raise any thing like eternal obstacles to the views of the catholics, must act disagreeably to him whose scruples upon the subject might be removed by time and consideration. The right honorable gentleman concluded this part of the subject by referring to the conduct of the last administration, whose promptitude in dropping the bill respecting the catholics he approved, perhaps much more than he did of their original introduction of it. I think, said Mr. S. they began at the wrong end. They should have commenced the measure of redress in Ireland at the cottage, instead of at the park and the mansion. To have gone first to the higher orders of the catholics; to have sought to make them judges, and peers, and commoners; I do not know that such a proceeding, had it taken place, would not rather have served to aggravate discontent, as it might have been construed into a design to divide the interests of the catholics. Sure I am, that with a view to serve or to conciliate the catholic population, I mean the poor, the peasantry, its effect would be nothing; indeed it would be quite a mockery. It would be like dressing or de-

corating the top masts of a ship when there were ten feet water in the hold, or putting a laced hat on a man who had not a shoe to his foot. The place to set out to in Ireland for the relief of the people, is the cottage. The distressed state of the peasantry must be first considered, and above all the tythes. I should hope that every man of good sense or good heart, would be forward to devote some part of his attention to this important question. A great deal of information with respect to the state of the Irish peasantry, and the best means of relieving them, may be collected from private sources. I have had many communications on the subject, and I have looked into several valuable books and pamphlets respecting the Irish peasantry, but have been particularly interested by Mr. Bell's treatise upon them. It would not require much reading after this book to make gentlemen fully acquainted with the state, habits, and character of these poor peasantry, whose sufferings have so long and forcibly appealed to the humanity and justice of the legislature. I have heard it said, and I have been always shocked at the assertion, that the Irish peasantry might be comfortable if they chose to be industrious; and that it is idle to attempt any improvement of their condition. It is abominable to hear blame laid on providence instead of laying it on man. Can any set of men, I would ask, be found, who manifest so much of the qualities of which these cruel calumniators would deprive them as the Irish peasantry? But they are only calumniated by those men who would degrade them below the level of the human creation, in order to palliate their own inhumanity towards them. We were told in England, that the unhappy Africans were insensible to the ordinary feelings of humanity, in order to render us indifferent to their sufferings, and to the custom of the slave-trade. On similar motives the character of the Irish peasantry is so foully misrepresented by some men in this country and in Ireland also. But what palpable

evidence do the Irish peasants, wherever you meet them, afford of the falsehood of their slanderers!—Can any men exhibit more of enterprize than those peasants, in coming to this country in search of employment, or more of affection for country and family, in returning home with the pittance they earn here? Is it not manifest to every one of you, that the charge of indisposition to industry cannot apply to those poor men, who, in fact, do all the hard work of this metropolis? When then the Irish exhibit such a character in this country, it is impossible that such a difference at home as some gentlemen assert to exist, can proceed from any other than gross misrule. If I were proposing this inquiry in time of profound peace, I should expect your acquiescence in it; but in the difficulties which now surround the country, the claim is, in my mind, irresistible. I know it has been the long hackneyed cant, that such and such is the most perilous period the country has ever known. But without any such cant, without any exaggeration whatever, I defy any man to shew me a a period in our history so full of peril; and where shall we look for aid? I am sick of continental alliances, of hearing about the magnanimous Alexander, &c. &c. When, however, I look at the conduct of that sovereign, triumphing at Petersburgh upon acquisitions of territory plundered from Prussia, his ally, to whom, were he really magnanimous, he ought rather to have given territory, I cannot endure the idea of turning to the continent for any thing to confide in for our existence. When I look at France, not as Mr. Burke described it a blank in the map of Europe; but when I see nothing almost but France; when I look to the state of the East Indies, and to that of the West also, I find, indeed, that on Monday you pledged yourself to inquire into the state of property in those islands, and very properly too. But when you thus pledge yourselves to inquire as to the property of the West India planters, is it too much

for me to propose a pledge that you will take into your consideration, not the property of the Irish, but their allegiance, liberty, and right? When I look at America—but in mentioning that country I should be sorry if understood at all to speak in terms ill calculated to encourage a disposition to surrender that privilege which we cannot surrender, without abandoning our maritime power and importance. When I have thus reviewed the state of our colonies, connections, and allies, and find the appearance so gloomy, is it unreasonable that I should ask you to look at your statute-book, and to study the means of conciliating the alliance of your own subjects? While such menacing danger hangs over us, I cannot, without serious pain, reflect upon the manner in which you employ yourselves; one party charging the other, and *vice versa;* "You did that job," "No, but you did worse;" "My plan required more recruits than your's," "No, but it did not." As if men were recruiting for a wager, and the only object of debate was to criminate each other. I cannot think patiently of such petty squabbles, while Buonaparte is grasping the nations; while he is surrounding France, not with that iron frontier, for which the wish and childish ambition of Louis XIV. was so eager, but with kingdoms of his own creation; securing the gratitude of higher minds as the hostage, and the fears of others as pledges for his safety. His are no ordinary fortifications. His martello towers are thrones; sceptres tipt with crowns are the palisadoes of his entrenchments, and kings are his centinels. In such a state of the world then, and with such an enemy, viewing this country as the only remaining object of his ambition to destroy, surely the policy of looking to all the means of strengthening yourselves is too obvious to require comment. Let me then exhort you to consider the means of rendering that country really serviceable to you. I have heard of subsidies. Your subsidies to Prussia were considerable in amount, and yet

quite unproductive in effect. Why don't you subsidize Ireland? And all the subsidies I ask for her is your confidence, affection, and justice to her people. These I call upon you to grant before it be too late. If you refuse to see the danger that menaces, and will not consider in due time about the means which I propose to you for providing against it, it is a bad symptom. The first character of courage is to look at danger with a dauntless eye, and the next to combat it with a dauntless heart. If, with this resolution, we front our dangers, history will do justice to our feelings and character, whatever may be the exertions or the success of the formidable tyrant who would destroy us, or of those who succeed to his power and views. The honest historian will not fail to yield a just tribute to our reputation. If faithful to ourselves, if united, we shall, in these two little islands, to which, as to an altar, Freedom has flown for refuge, be able to fight with all the valorous fury of men defending a violated sanctuary.

The right honorable gentleman concluded with an animated exhortation to the house, to aim a blow at the fellest foe to British greatness and security, namely, internal discontent, by acceding to his motion. Then the right honorable gentleman read his motion, which was as follows:

"That the house will, immediately on the meeting of the ensuing session of parliament, proceed to take into their most serious and solemn consideration, the state and condition of Ireland, in the anxious hope, that such measures and remedies may be safely adopted in regard to the discontents alleged to exist in that country, as may render unnecessary the continuance of those provisions which the legislature of the United Kingdom has deemed it expedient reluctantly to adopt at the close of the present session, and the permanence of which would be a violation of the rights of the people of Ireland, and

a subversion of the spirit and practice of our free constitution."

After he had read his motion, the right honorable gentleman expressed his readiness to acquiesce in any amendment, which should leave its main object untouched. It did not matter to him by whom the object was taken up. His desire was to have the thing done; and if any gentleman on any side of the house, would follow it up, he would be entitled to the gratitude of Ireland, and he should have his warmest thanks.

Towards the close of the debate,

Mr. Sheridan rose amidst cries of "*question,*" and expressed his hope that the house would indulge him with the privilege usually granted to persons who brought forward a motion, and hear his reply to such arguments as seemed to him peculiarly to call for attention. Of this privilege he would not avail himself at any length. First, then, he would have no objection whatever to alter his motion in the manner proposed by his right honorable friend (Mr. Windham) near him; and, indeed, to any alteration that did not destroy the substance of his motion, he had already pledged himself to agree.

[*The Speaker here interrupted the right honorable gentleman, and informed him, that consistently with the resolution of* 1778, *and the usages of the house, there could be no alteration in the motion after the previous question had been put.*]

Mr. Sheridan, in continuation, observed, that in that case, he had no doubt, the right honorable gentleman opposite would withdraw his motion, in compliance with the general wish of the house. He wished to have his answer. [*No answer.*] Well, the time for answering was not yet come perhaps. However, nothing in the world had been more misunderstood in this respect than the motion which he had submitted. Gentlemen seemed to suppose that he had censured the passing of the late bills, and

thereby called upon the house to censure its own acts. He never had such intention, nor could his motion, by any one who took the trouble to attend to it, be supposed to carry any such meaning. He had distinctly declared in his speech, that he had now no such intention. But it might be said, that though not in his speech, it might be in his motion. What, then, was his motion? "That the house should take such measures as would render the provisions of the bills, lately with reluctance passed unnecessary." What did his right honorable friend (Mr. Windham), and his honorable friend (Mr. Herbert) over the way, object to? They could not surely object to the word "reluctantly." His right honorable friend over the way said, that he would join with him if he would strike out the latter part of his motion. What was that? Why, that the permanency of such measures would totally destroy the constitution. Did any one object to this? Then he would be glad to see the man who would stand up in his place, and say that such enactments ought to be permanent; or that, if permanent, they do not completely overturn the constitution. These acts were to be in force for three years; and, under these circumstances, there was at least a reversion of the constitution. But if you thought the permanency of such acts did not infringe the constitution, then you ought to make them permanent at once, for in that case where was the use of hesitation? Such enactments could not be considered in any other light, than as an infringement of the constitution; and, therefore, it was the duty of every man to limit their duration, as much as the necessity of the case would allow.

He felt it necessary to make some observations on what had fallen from the honorable gentleman on the bench below him. With all the respect he had for that gentleman's (Mr. Lockhart's) abilities; with all his deference to his means of information, and to the authority which he appeared to have with some,

yet, not being intimately acquainted with the honorable gentleman, and not having an opportunity of observing those talents and information that had been ascribed to him by those who knew him better, he was perfectly excusable in not giving him that entire confidence that had been given by others. That honorable gentleman had said, that he had listened with great anxiety to his speech, because he expected that he (Mr. S.) would have first stated the evil, and then the remedy. The honorable gentleman might have listened to his speech with anxiety, but he had certainly done so with more anxiety than attention. He said, that he (Mr. S.) ought to have pointed out the grievance. Certainly not. He never thought that he was bound specifically to do that in the present instance. When ministers came to him, asking him to give his assent to such regulations as these, the *onus probandi* lay on them. They were to shew what grievances called for such measures, and that too before the measure was passed. "But no," said the honorable gentleman, "pass your bills first, and then let us hear of grievances." Inquiry ought to precede the passing of these enactments, and the necessity for them ought to have been proved. However, the house had passed the bills, and all he wanted now was, that they should give a pledge to inquire whether they had passed them on good grounds or not. This was all he asked. His object was to keep this subject perpetually before the house. If the bills had been enacted only for a year, there would have been less cause for his motion. But as the period of their duration extended to three years, his object was, and he hoped the result of an inquiry would be unnecessary, to continue them for more than one year. This he was, for his own part, persuaded, would turn out to be the case, unless gentlemen chose to continue in ignorance, and rejected the means of acquiring information. But the honorable gentleman dwelt a good deal upon general

doctrine, and said that a boon ought not to be granted till you were strong, and had enabled yourselves to crush your petitioners if you chose! He (Mr. Sheridan) had really thought that men could distinguish between good and bad treatment, and that the one produced gratitude and attachment as naturally as the other revenge and hatred! "But no," said the honorable gentleman, "make them fear you first, that they may love you afterwards!" Then the honorable gentleman accused him of having said that Ireland had been used worse than a conquered country. Certainly, he had said that England had adopted a more ignorant and barbarous system of management with respect to Ireland, than ever any one nation with any pretensions to civilization, had adopted with respect to another. The honorable gentleman said, that he was taken *aback* with regard to his statement, when he allowed that concessions had been made in the present reign, and consequently the system changed. This, he supposed, was meant, for he did not pretend to understand the phrase "*taken aback*," not being a naval man, as the honorable gentleman probably was. That the concessions had been made with a very ill grace, he had certainly said. He did not wish, as he said before, to produce any irritation whatever; but if the times and circumstances when these concessions were made were considered, it would be found that they had been wrung from most unwilling minds, rather than conferred in an open, liberal, and generous manner. He (Mr. S.) deprecated waiting for such terms and circumstances. He was conferring favors, when they might be ascribed to a sense of generosity and justice, and not for waiting till they could be demanded, when you would not dare to refuse them. Now his right honorable friend (Mr. Grattan) on the bench near him, had a more able speech in favor of his motion than he himself could possibly do.—That speech was characteristic of his wonted genius,

and eloquence, and every thing must be full of genius, animation, and eloquence that came from him. This very speech was one great instance of the benefits to be derived from the motion now submitted to the house; for his right honorable friend had in the course of it thrown out more information respecting the state of Ireland, than ever had been communicated by any other member, or at any period for some time past. But another member accused him of libelling the legislation of this country, and our cosmopolitan and philanthropic parliament! But what had our most philanthropic parliament done for Ireland? Why, they legislated without inquiry for that country; but if his motion had been proposed and agreed to two or three years ago, parliament would have been better able to have legislated for Ireland. For the proof of this he would only refer to the speech of his right honorable friend, who had exposed the abuses with respect to tythes, the non-residence of the clergy, and state of the Protestant schools. The honorable gentleman seemed to be mightily offended at his saying that government had not been attentive to Ireland. For a proof of this too, he referred to the speech of his right honorable friend (Grattan) who had stated that 10,000 acres of land only supported eighteen Protestant schools; and yet with all this before them, some gentleman pretended that the government had paid the requisite attention to the state of Ireland. He hoped, however, that an attention of a different sort would be given it. Ireland expected this; England expected it; and the result he had no doubt would be beneficial to both countries. His right honorable friend had adverted to the state of tythes in Ireland, and from the ill-constructed method of collecting and managing these, had deducted a great part of the evils under which Ireland labored. The "hearts of steel," the "white boys," the "bright boys," and "thrashers," all arose from the tythes, which appeared the most cruel of the burthens under

which the lower ranks of people in Ireland groaned. Why then, did not this sufficiently account for the disaffection in Ireland, without having recourse to the idea of a French faction? His right honorable friend admitted the general loyalty of the people of Ireland; but still said there was a French party in Ireland: a French party; but contemptible; a miserable faction, destitute of talents and energy, and of trifling numbers. What he wanted then was, to have the nature of this danger ascertained, to see in what it consisted, to find out the strength of this French faction, and if so contemptible as his right honorable friend had said, to apply a remedy equal to the disease, and not to overturn the whole constitution of the country on account of a wretched faction. His right honorable friend had compared the general loyalty of Ireland and her French faction, to a beauty with a pimple on her face; a very gallant illustration, and one that must certainly be admired by Irishmen. But if he (Mr. S.) were to give his advice to this beauty, he would say to her, "my lovely charmer, put a patch on that pimple, but do not cover your whole face with a mask." Apply this to Ireland. Were the whole of the loyal Irish to be deprived of their liberties, because there existed a contemptible French faction? Let the remedy meet the evil, but no more; let not the foul mask of despotism cover the land, but let liberty bloom in all her beauty, where there existed a soil in which she was capable of flourishing. It had been said, that now, in this difficult crisis, was the time for the Catholics to show their loyalty and attachment to the constitution, and their worthiness to enjoy its benefits! But this was beginning at the wrong end. If you want the attachment of the Irish, begin by giving them some reason to love you. If you want them to fight your battles, give them something to fight for. But the other way, to deprive them of their constitution in the mean time, was

"Propter vitam, vitæ perdere causas."

You asked them for bravery, and took away the motives to it. You asked for loyalty, and bid them contend for their laws and liberties, and at the same time deprived them of the benefits of the constitution. But his right honorable friend said, that they were only deprived of this for a time, and that they would have their liberties again after they had achieved some acts that would show their zeal and loyalty. He had a different view of this subject. He wished to give them the motives to act, before he sent them to action. But what was this proof required of the Irish Catholics? Had they not already given it? Where, by sea or by land, had they failed to do their duty? When had they shrunk in the moment of invasion? When had they been deficient in expressions of loyalty and attachment to the constitution? And when have their words been falsified by their actions? Yet his honorable friend seemed to think, that proofs of their loyalty and zeal for the constitution were wanting! You must, however, trust the Catholics; you must have them in your Irish militia. Why then suspect them, and subject them to penalties without cause? He might be wrong in this; but if that was so let it be proved. His right honorable friend close by him (Mr. Windham), had said, that he seemed to hold the concessions to the Roman Catholics cheap. He certainly had never done so, and his right honorable friend was mistaken. He had said, that if what was called Catholic emancipation was granted without some other measures in favour of the poorer classes, it might excite envy and jealousy in them. The benefits to them they would consider as not running *pari passu* with those to their superiors, and certainly without some caution what was intended to promote harmony, might become the excitement to contention. But what did the bill proposed by the late administration in favor of the Catholics do? It certainly did a great deal indeed, when it proposed to abolish the restrictions on the Roman Catholic

officer, when he came to a certain rank; an officer who stood in this singular situation, that he rose till he had an opportunity of doing some act worthy of preferment; and however great the services he might perform, there he stopped, and the disabilities under which he labored damped his ardor, and rendered him less fit or disposed for enterprize and exertion. The unfortunate Catholic officer might therefore be said to rise to his degradation. The removal of such restrictions were doing much, and the best effects would certainly have followed from the adoption of such a measure. Was it not better to put confidence in the Irish than to bind them down by restrictions? The enemy might hope to break their chains, but they could not expect to turn towards them those hearts that had been conciliated by kindness and confidence. Instead, therefore, of putting them on trial, his wish certainly would be, to give them the benefits of the constitution before they mustered in the field. Instead of the yoke of slavery, he would hang the privilege of the constitution about their necks, and arm them with their rights. Without this, it was impossible to expect that the Irish Catholics should be so cordial in their loyalty and attachment to the constitution as they would otherwise be. He had heard nothing more that appeared to him to require any particular observation. But he again repeated, that if no other good effect should result from this motion, than an acknowledgment on the part of parliament, of the importance of the subject, the motion ought to be adopted. Charles the First, asked Selden, "what was the best way to put down a rebellion?" to which Selden answered, "remove the cause." He begged of the government to apply this answer to Ireland, and put an end to the disaffection there, by removing the cause. He would keep his word, and trespass no longer on the indulgence that had been granted him.

The house divided; for the motion 33; *against it* 76.

JUNE 15, 1808.

AFFAIRS OF SPAIN.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose to call the attention of the house to the affairs of Spain. It had been proposed to him to put off the subject, on the ground, that the gentlemen from that country now residing here, were this day gone to partake of the hospitality of his right honorable friend the Secretary of State for foreign affairs. He believed, however, with all the enthusiasm they must naturally feel on such a subject, they would be equally well entertained with his right honorable friend's dinner, as they would have been with listening to what he had to say. He could, therefore, on that ground feel no hesitation in persevering in the motion of which he had given notice. He understood, besides, that his right honorable friend had dispatched a general belonging to Ireland, to represent him at this entertainment. That these noble foreigners would feel themselves particularly happy in the company of that gallant officer, he could have no doubt; the more especially as it was understood, that his right honorable friend had not sent him to represent himself at his hospitable board alone, but that he was also to be sent to represent this country in fighting the battles of Spain, where he (Mr. Sheridan) was satisfied his services would be unfeigned. He begged leave to correct an idea that seemed to have gone abroad, that he meant to make an harangue or exhortation to ministers on this subject. Nothing was further from his intention. He simply meant to call the attention of ministers, and of the house, to the subject, not to lecture them into it. All that he had to say, he had communicated some days ago to his right honorable friend. The right honorable and learned gentleman opposite (Mr. Perceval) did not give credit to this; and he had also had the misfortune to fall under the odium of his honorable friend near him, as if by his present notice he had meant to

save government from all responsibility on the subject. Thus, on one side, he had been suspected of wishing to injure, on the other to save from any subsequent stigma, the existing government. In neither of these conjectures, however, was there any truth. Notwithstanding the high opinion he had of the probity, zeal, ability, and estimable qualities of his honorable friend (Mr. Whitbread), and with all his promptitude for business, he could not say that he was particularly distinguished by a promptitude to go into the opinions of others, or to doubt his own judgment. His honorable friend must, therefore excuse him, if he did not, on the present occasion, yield to his recommendation. He had no other desire but to bring under discussion a subject to which the attention of the people of England was called at the present important moment. He did not ask ministers to embark in any foolish or romantic speculation; but he was satisfied that there never was a time, since the commencement of the French revolution, taking it for granted, that the flame would spread, there never was, he was satisfied, so great an opportunity and occasion for this country to strike a bold stroke, which might end in the rescue of the world. It might be asked, if he was inclined to trust to the conduct and prudence of ministers, why did he bring the matter before parliament? He confessed that he was not friendly to ministers; but still this was not a subject for party. He therefore wished to express his opinion to ministers, and that opinion was, that they should not deal in dribblets; but if they could not do much, that they should do nothing. There never was, he believed, in this country, a government, except during the administration of his dear friend now no more (Mr. Fox), in which one object only was pursued. When they should have been aiming a blow at the heart of France, there was always something else to distract the attention; when they should have been at

the core of the heart, they were always found nibbling at the rind. There was hardly a single person, except his right honorable friend near him (Mr. Windham) and Mr. Burke, who since the revolution of France, had formed adequate notions of the necessary steps to be taken. The various governments which this country had seen during that period, were always employed in filching for a sugar island, or some other object of comparatively trifling moment, while the main and principal pursuit was lost sight of and forgotten. Let Spain see, that we were not inclined to stint the services we had it in our power to render her; that we were not actuated by the desire of any petty advantage to ourselves; but that our exertions were to be solely directed to the attainment of the grand and general object, the emancipation of the world. He again repeated, let not our assistance be given in dribblets. But he also again repeated, let it not be romantically and foolishly bestowed. Let it be seen, that the enthusiasm of the people had been fairly awakened; without that our efforts could avail nothing. But if the flame were once fairly caught, our success was certain. France would then find, that she had hitherto been contending only against principalities, powers, and authorities, but that she had now to contend against a people. The right honorable gentleman said he brought nothing on for discussion; he only wished to call the attention of ministers to a subject in which the feelings of the people of this country were so deeply interested. If they acted properly, they might depend on having his most steady and sincere support. Would any man tell him that there was no use in agitating a question of this kind? Would it not be known in Spain, and would it not preserve and even rouse the spirit of the people of that country to know, that the unanimous voice of parliament, as well as of the people of Great Britain, was raised in their favor, andth e ir cordial assistance and co-operation ready

to be afforded them? Was he then to be told, if an opportunity should arise of affording effectual aid to Spain, that it was not of importance that the subject had been agitated in that house? He had entire confidence in the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Canning), that nothing on his part would be wanting. The crisis was the most important which could be conceived: the stand made in the Asturias was the most glorious. He hoped that the progress of it would be closely watched, and not a single opportunity lost of adding vigor and energy to the spirit which seemed to exist there. The symptoms could not be long in shewing themselves, their progress must be rapid; probably the very next dispatch might be sufficient to enable a decisive opinion to be formed. If the flame did not burn like wildfire, it was all over. He hoped ministers would act as circumstances required; and if so, they should, as he had already said, receive his support. He concluded by moving, "that an humble address be presented to His Majesty, that he will be graciously pleased to direct, that there be laid before this house, copies of such proclamations as have been received by His Majesty's Secretary of State for foreign affairs, and which have been issued since the arrival of the French army at Madrid, whether by the Spanish government, the French commander-in-chief, or by persons since claiming to act on behalf of the Spanish nation.

The motion was afterwards withdrawn.

JUNE 17.

CARNATIC QUESTION.

Mr. SHERIDAN felt, that after the personal allusions so frequently made to him, he should not act respectfully towards the noble lord (Castlereagh) if he continued silent on the present occasion The noble lord concluded a speech, filled with the strangest and most monstrous doctrines he had ever

heard, with a solemn appeal to the justice of the house, calling upon it not to establish so bad a moral as that of exposing the delinquency of public servants, for fear their conduct should be compared with the enormities of our enemies. It was with reluctance he entered on any of the enormities committed in India. In making such a declaration, the noble lord was not aware of the libel which he pronounced on an honorable friend of his, who was lately chief justice in India. Here Mr. Sheridan quoted a speech delivered at the time of Mr. Hastings's impeachment, by Mr. (now Sir John) Anstruther, in which that gentleman dwelt on the enormities practised in India, and insisted on the necessity of investigation and punishment. But now the house was to understand, from the speech of the noble lord, that no governor in India, let his crimes be ever so great, was to have his conduct at all enquired into. He maintained, that the best way to hold out to the world that we practised no enormities, was to punish those who committed any. The noble marquis, whose conduct was now the subject of discussion, had lately made an observation, that the attack upon Copenhagen, and the seizure of the Danish fleet, was an event which Englishmen ought to rejoice, because it would grieve Buonaparte. It was unwise in the noble marquis to make such a declaration; because he believed it to be entirely the reverse of what was the fact. He sincerely believed, that Buonaparte never felt more joy at any event than what this act of ours gave him. In that act he saw our character blended with his own. He found in it an indemnity for the past, and a security for the future. The noble lord's code of political morality was the worst he had ever heard broached in that house. His desultory term *Will o' the Wisp* speech had not put down a single argument advanced by his learned friend, to whom he felt grateful for the sentiments he delivered. He

did not feel a wish to say any thing uncivil towards the noble lord, particularly so, after the very handsome manner in which the noble lord spoke of him the evening before last. But he should have supposed, had he not known his assiduity, the noble lord had never read the papers relative to this subject. He had said that Ally Hussein had forfeited his right to the throne, inasmuch as he inherited the treason of his father. He could never have been a party to a treason, which had not been communicated to him, and with which the father had not been charged in his life time. He never knew a more monstrous attempt than this to impose on the credulity of the public. There was no analogy in this case to that of the house of the Stuarts, in which a country chose its own magistrates, which every people had a right to do; but here was an independant prince, who was an ally; and what right had any man to say, that we should dismiss from the throne of his ancestors the lawful heir to that throne, against whom no charge whatever could be made? But what became of all this argument, when the fact is, that Azeen ul Dowlah was put on the musnud over the son of a person who was actually proved to be an enemy to the British interests? The noble lord shewed the grossest ignorance of the papers; for the very correspondence he referred to was carried on with the consent of the government of Madras. *(Hear!)* As to the cypher, he appealed to the honorable baronet who was chief justice in India, and would ask, if he would suffer a man to be convicted on such evidence *(Sir John Anstruther signified that he would not)*, he was happy to hear his honorable friend say he would not. Yet it was on such evidence, that an innocent young prince was deprived of his throne, and placed in a situation in which he lost his life. Mr. Sheridan then read some correspondence, in order to shew that the British government in India considered it as likely to be favorable to their interests, to have an intimate

correspondence and connection carried on between the house of Arcot and the Mysore. It was attempted to justify this transaction, on the ground of state necessity. But this act of injustice and robbery could not be an act resulting from state necessity, because there existed no necessity for it, or at least none had been shewn, to influence their decision. Here Mr. Sheridan read some papers, to shew the steady attachment of the nabob to the English; and he defied any governor to say, that there existed the slightest proof of the hostility of the father or the son, except what was extracted from the trash found at Seringapatam. The arguments that had been used to prove that the nabob was considered as a vassal to the India company, were as unjust as they were unfounded. The important documents on the table put that question out of all doubt, for it would appear by an address actually signed by his majesty, countersigned by Lord Cornwallis, and addressed to the nabob, dated the 13th of May, 1790, that he was considered not only as an independant sovereign, but actually called the "faithful ally and friend" of the British government in India. Here the right honorable gentleman read a long extract from the address alluded to, from which it likewise appeared that the very first acre of ground the English became possessed of round Madras was acquired through the friendship of the nabob of Arcot; yet he argued, after such an unqualified declaration under His Majesty's own hand, of the independency of this prince, such degrading language was to be held out. Was it to be endured for one single moment, that the rights and laws of nations were to be thus trampled upon with impunity, merely upon the alleged policy of the measure? From a very patient perusal of the very important documents on the table, they established this proposition in his mind, that there was no ground whatever for any suspicion of the faithfulness of the nabob of Arcot and his son towards

the British government. There was one part of this question which he could not but consider as a great dereliction of principle in the noble marquis. It was said that he took every possible care for the protection of Ally Hussein, the deposed nabob. Could it be thought for a moment, that the deposed nabob would be safe in the hands of a man who threatened him with instant death if he ever attempted to regain the throne of his father? From these circumstances he concluded, that the young nabob was not safe in those hands. He did not feel disposed even to enter into all the motives that might have actuated the noble marquis in his conduct, and he was less disposed to argue the accusation urged against him of his being actuated by pecuniary interests in his administration; but looking at his general conduct as a governor of India, he must say there was no parallel in the history of that country which presented so unbridled an instance of insatiable ambition. The sum total of what the country knew of his conduct as governor was, that he succeeded to the government after Lord Cornwallis. He found India in a great and increasing state of prosperity. He found a system of equity and economy in the public expenditure, admirably calculated for the solidity of our establishment in that country. But when he left it, he left behind him an example of the most pernicious prodigality and profuseness; when he landed, he found a disposition in the company's servants to revere the laws, and to abide the decrees of his majesty; but when he left it, the utmost contempt prevailed of the laws and regulations of the company. When he went there, the native powers of India placed the utmost confidence in the faith of the British government; but he left them entertaining in their minds the most irreconcileable sentiment of disgust and enmity, on account of its treachery and oppression. In short, the result of the noble lord's administration was this, that when he went to India, he found

Great Britain without a foe, and when he departed, he left Great Britain without a friend. Upon these grounds he felt he was called upon to say thus much, not from any personal enmity to the noble marquis, but from a principal of preserving his own consistency. He took this opportunity of defending himself from the insinuation thrown out by the noble lord (Castlereagh) in the commencement of his speech, that he had departed from principle in seeming to neglect the cause he had so strenuously undertaken to advocate on former occasions, by stating that his sentiments upon this subject had never been in the least altered from the first intimation he received of the oppression and tyrannous dethronement of the young nabob, and the subsequent information that arrived in this country of his murder. On that occasion his mind was so horrified by the atrocity of the act, that he resolved himself immediately to institute an enquiry into the causes of so gross a violation of the laws of civilization and humanity. Circumstances, however, had prevented him from carrying the desired object completely into effect personally. He saw no prospect then of pursuing the investigation in that administration, and from these considerations he did not press it. He had, however, moved from time to time for a great number of documents, which must remove at once every suspicion of his having cooled in the cause. He concluded by declaring his fixed determination at all times never to shrink from the task he had imposed upon himself, of representing the noble marquis's conduct in the plain and unvarnished manner in which he fully persuaded himself the various documents on the table exhibited the circumstances of his administration to the country.

END OF THE SPEECHES.

MEMOIRS

OF THE LATE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN,

&c. &c.

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN was the third son of Mr. Thomas Sheridan, a gentleman well known by his endeavors to promote and improve the art of oratory in Great Britain, and universally acknowledged the best declaimer of English of his day; he was a considerable time manager of the Dublin Theatre, which the furious animosity of party obliged him to quit; but in England he found fame and prospect enough to leave him little cause to regret his banishment from his native country.

The father of Mr. Thomas Sheridan, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Sheridan, was the intimate friend and favorite of Dean Swift,* the compa-

* In the debate on the treason and seditious bills, on the 10th of December, 1795, the character of this eminent divine having been reflected on by Mr. J. W. Browne, it was most warmly and feelingly supported, by Mr. R. B. Sheridan.—Vide vol. iv. 201, 202, 203.

nion of his leisure, the depository of his confidence, and the imitator of his wit.

Mrs. Frances Sheridan, the mother of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, was the intimate friend of Dr. Samuel Johnson; she is the authoress of the novel "Sidney Biddulph," "Nourjahad" an oriental tale, the comedies of the "Discovery," "Dupe," and "A Trip to Bath:" she was also the translator of the Memoirs and Letters of the celebrated "Niron de l'Enclos," published in 1761, in two pocket volumes. This lady died at Blois, on the 17th of September, 1766; and such was the respect paid to her memory, by the bishop of that place, that he caused it to be intimated to her friends, notwithstanding the difference of religious persuasion, that they might take advantage of the night to deposit her remains in consecrated ground, and no interruption should be given to the interment.

The subject of this sketch, was born in the month of October, 1751, in Dorset Street, Dublin, and on attaining his seventh year, he was placed with his eldest brother Charles Francis, formerly Secretary at War in Ireland, and the Historian of the Revolution in Sweden, under the tuition of a friend of their fathers, Mr. Samuel Whyte of Dublin, who having opened an academy in April, 1758, these two brothers were the first pupils ad-

mitted. Shortly after this, the affairs of Mr. Thomas Sheridan compelled him to leave Ireland: he removed to England, and settled at Windsor.

It is a circumstance deserving of note, that the early years of Mr. Sheridan afforded little promise of the uncommon talents he has since exhibited; and this is evident, from a letter written by his mother, to Mr. Whyte, in which she observes: "These boys will be your tutors in that respect (patience). I have hitherto been their only instructor, and they have sufficiently exercised mine; for two such impenetrable dunces I never met with."*

After remaining under the care of Mr. Whyte nearly eighteen months, they were sent to England, and for one year, resumed their education under their parents. In 1762, Mr. Thomas Sheridan's talents were, unsolicited by him, honored with a pension, and being at this time in easy circumstances, he determined on placing his younger son, Richard Brinsley, at Harrow School, at the head of which celebrated seminary, was the learned Dr. Sumner and Dr. Parr. In a letter written by Mrs. Sheridan on this circumstance,

* This, and some subsequent anecdotes, have appeared before the public in former sketches, &c. of Mr. Sheridan's life; but they point out so forcibly the early habits of our subject, as to render an apology for their insertion in these Memoirs unnecessary.

she makes the following singular remark—"Dick has been at Harrow school since Christmas; as he probably may fall into a bustling life, we have a mind to accustom him early to shift for himself."

Although the exertions of Mrs. Sheridan and Mr. Whyte had failed in producing a semblance of those talents, that have since so highly adorned our literary annals, and shed so bright a lustre upon this age, the unremitting efforts of Dr. Parr were crowned with the most perfect success: he elicited the latent spark of splendid genius, and brought into activity the slumbering energies of his pupil; who has since enriched our dramatic literature, adorned our poetry, enlivened the highest and most cultivated circles with his powers of conversation, his elegant demeanour, and his unsurpassed wit, and who has formed so conspicuous a feature in our senatorial discussions on so many great occasions. The efforts of Dr. Parr, in this instance, therefore, are no inconsiderable addition to the many obligations the literary world is under to that eminent and worthy divine.

In 1769, Mr. Sheridan quitted Harrow school; his father was so fully satisfied of his attainments, that he considered it unnecessary to send him to the University, and he was entered a student of the Middle Temple.

The income allowed at this period to Mr. Sheridan by his father, being insufficient for his support, he was compelled to increase it by literary exertions; and he became a constant contributor to the productions of the day. He also, at this time, gave his attention to dramatic writings; but from being disgusted with some sketches of comic character which he drew, he actually destroyed them; and, in a moment of despair, renounced every hope of excellence as a dramatic writer.—Mr. Sheridan, likewise, engaged with a friend, Mr. Halhed, in a poetical* translation of the Love Epistles of Aristænetus, from the Greek. The poems are written in many different measures; for which the preface accounts, by saying, that "something beside caprice may be urged in their favor; for, by a variation of metre, the style almost necessarily undergoes an alteration; and, in general, the particular strain of each epistle suggested the particular measure in which it is written."

These pursuits drew Mr. Sheridan's atten-

* At the close of this Memoir, a few specimens of Mr. Sheridan's delightful muse will be introduced; and, likewise, some beautiful lines to his memory, written by those who can justly estimate and acknowledge his extraordinary genius.—The specimens are necessarily very limited. With the greatest difficulty we have prevented the work swelling to a sixth volume, so many interesting circumstances relating to Mr. Sheridan, hourly occurring to our recollection;—and the same consideration occasions this Sketch to be confined almost entirely to some of his political measures.

tion from the profession of the law; and, consequently he was never called to the bar.

Mr. Sheridan became about this time the suitor of Miss Elizabeth Linley, a most accomplished young lady, and the principal performer in the Oratorios at Drury-lane Theatre, and daughter of the ingenious composer.—Her father had crowned those gifts which Nature, with a very lavish hand, had bestowed on his daughter, with every advantage which can result from a thorough acquaintance with the science, whose attribute is

"To soften rocks and bend the knotted oak."

Her beauty and talents procured her the distinguished title of the Maid of Bath. Captain Matthews, a gentleman well known in the fashionable circles of the period, having caused a paragraph to be inserted in one of the public papers of Bath, prejudicial to the character of Miss Linley, a duel took place between him and Mr. Sheridan; and the latter having succeeded in disarming his adversary, he compelled him to sign a paper, in which he made a formal retraction of the paragraph. Upon this being settled, Mr. Sheridan set out for Bath, and immediately published the apology in the paper which had contained the obnoxious paragraph. Captain Matthews, in consequence of this, demanded of Mr. Sheridan satisfaction,—and another meeting took

place; after a discharge of pistols the parties fought with swords: both were wounded, and closing with each other, fell on the ground, where the fight was continued until they were separated. Shortly after this, Mr. Sheridan's suit was crowned with success, by Miss Linley accompanying him on a matrimonial excursion to the Continent. The ceremony was again performed, 13th April, 1773, on their return to England, with the consent of Miss Linley's* parents.

Though at this period Mr. Sheridan's circumstances were far from brilliant, he displayed that elevation of mind which is a constant characteristic of true genius: his lady had not brought him any fortune, and her talents were fully sufficient to have indemnified him in that respect; but Mr. Sheridan, though at this time only in his twenty-third year, and far removed from brilliant prospects, would not condescend to receive the salary annexed to the exertion of her abilities; and, notwithstanding several very advantageous and

* The following lines were addressed by Mr. Sheridan to this lady, previous to their union:—

"Mark'd you her eyes of heav'nly blue,
Mark'd you her cheek of roseate hue!
That *eye* in liquid circles moving,
That *cheek* abash'd at man's approving:
The one, Love's arrow darting round,
The other, *blushing* at the wound."

lucrative offers were made,* she was never permitted by her husband to appear as a public performer.

Depending on his own talents for support, Mr. Sheridan again turned his attention to the theatre, and in 1774 wrote the admirable comedy of "The Rivals." He gave it to Mr. Harris, the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, and it was first represented on the 17th of January in the following year. It did not, however, experience the approbation it merited, owing principally to the Irish character of Sir Lucius O'Trigger being ill supported by Mr. Lee. Mr. Sheridan afterwards made some alterations, and it was again brought forward, and received with the greatest *eclat*.

The success of "The Rivals" gave a strong impulse to Mr. Sheridan's theatrical genius. He next wrote the farce "St. Patrick's Day, or the Scheming Lieutenant," and presented it to Mr. Clinch, as a testimony of his gratitude for the assistance he had experienced from that gentleman's admirable performance of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, in the Rivals, in which he had succeeded Mr. Lee. This farce was written, it has been stated, in forty-eight hours, and was performed for Mr. Clinch's

* Her situation in the Oratorios was filled by her younger sister, who died singing—"I know that my Redeemer liveth."

benefit on the 2d of May, 1775. In the ensuing season, Mr. Sheridan produced his comic opera "The Duenna," and which was so well received as to be performed seventy-five nights during the season.

On Mr. Garrick resolving to retire from, and give up his connexion with, the stage, a negotiation for the purchase of his share of the patent of Drury-lane Theatre, was entered into by Dr. Ford, Mr. Linley, and Mr. Sheridan; who, in 1776, paid for it the sum of thirty thousand pounds.

Mr. Sheridan's next production was "The Trip to Scarborough," a comedy, altered from Vanburgh's "Relapse." It was performed on the 24th February, 1777; and, although not very favourably received on that night, owing to the inaccuracy of the performers, it was afterwards played with great success to crouded houses.*

"The School for Scandal," which, as long as the English stage exists, will be a standard comedy, followed, and was first performed on the 8th of May. Forty years have now elapsed since this comedy was brought out; during that long period, not any writer has

* The copy of this play was lost after the first night's representation, and all the performers were summoned together early the next day, in order, by the assistance of their parts, to prepare another prompter's book.

produced a comedy to be put in competition with it. In the same year Mr. Sheridan made alterations in Shakespeare's Tempest. In 1781, he wrote "The Critic, or a Tragedy Rehearsed," written upon the model of "The Rehearsal," * which, as well as "The School for Scandal," is unequalled.

An intimate acquaintance with the late Right Hon. Charles James Fox,† opened a new and widely-extended field to the aspiring mind of Mr. Sheridan, and produced in him a strong

* In addition to these, the musical piece "The Camp," is attributed to his pen, but it is positively denied by Mr. Tate Williamson that Mr. Sheridan was its author.

Kotzebue's drama of Pizarro received considerable improvements from Mr. Sheridan's talents. The speech of Rolla, exhorting the Peruvians to defend their king and country, and their civil and religious institutions, against a ferocious band of lawless invaders, is exclusively from Mr. Sheridan's pen.

† Mr. Sheridan's opinion of this great man deserves notice. In the debate on the Regency Restrictions, 16th January, 1789, vol. II. p. 147, 148, Mr. Pitt having wantonly attacked the character of Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan declared, "it was the characteristic distinction of his (Mr. Fox's) heart to compel the most submissive devotion of mind and affection from all those who came under the observation of it; and force them, by the most powerful and amiable of all influence, to become the inseparable associates of his fortune. With respect to his talents, he would not speak of them; they would derive no support from any man's attestation, nor the most flattering panegyric from the most enlightened of his friends. Thus much he would only observe, with regard to the abilities of his honorable friend, that it was the utmost of any other man's talents, and the best proof of their existence, that he was able to understand the extent, and comprehend the superiority of them. It was the pride and glory of his life to enjoy the happiness of his friendship."

desire to enter on the political stage. At the general election in 1780, he therefore, by the recommendation of Mr. Fox, proposed himself as a candidate to represent the borough of Stafford, and was accordingly returned.

At this period the British Senate had to boast of more able and enlightened men than perhaps it had ever enjoyed. The reputation for extraordinary talent, which Burke, Fox, Pitt, and others had established, were formidable checks to any but the strong, aspiring, and confident mind of Sheridan, who boldly entered the lists as a competitor. He did not feel

——— "How hard it is to climb
"The steep, where Fame's proud Temple shines afar."

Recommended solely by the vigour and versatility of his genius, he was not to be daunted by the hazard of the undertaking; he had a just estimation of his own natural and acquired powers; and shortly after taking his seat distinguished himself by successfully wielding the various weapons for which those eminent orators were respectively celebrated.

The idea Mr. Fox entertained of the talents of Mr. Sheridan cannot be stronger expressed than in quoting an observation he made in the course of a speech of uncommon eloquence,

on his motion* for putting an end to the war with France. Mr. Fox remarked, " if in point of ability, if in point of integrity and honor, if in point of every quality that could adorn the character of man, they† were compared with his honourable friend, Mr. Sheridan, they were compared with their equal, and the comparison would do them no dishonour."‡

It was natural, on obtaining a seat in parliament, that Mr. Sheridan should give his splendid talents in aid of his friend Mr. Fox, and consequently he became a firm supporter of the measures of that statesman, and joined his party, then in opposition.

The first motion Mr. Sheridan made in the house was on a subject of the greatest importance.§ It was founded on the employment of the military during the riots, which occurred on the Protestant petition in 1780. The wretched imbecility of the magistracy of the metropolis had laid the inhabitants open to the violence of a contemptible rabble, and the enormities they committed became topics which were applied with great success, to show the inefficacy, in all cases, of the civil authority in affording protection, and the ne-

* May 30th, 1794.

† A Secret Committee of the House.

‡ Vide Fox's Speeches, Vol. V. p. 308.

§ For the better regulation of the police of Westminster, 5th March, 1781. Vol. I. p. 6.

cessity of a military force for preserving order and good government. This dangerous and unconstitutional doctrine went likewise to reconcile the people to the authority, with which, under colour of the riots, the military power, throughout the kingdom, had been endued, of acting immediately from its own motion, independently of the civil magistrate. The invincible jealousy of military power, which had so long characterized this country, grew familiarised to the aspect of an armed force, and gradually gave way to impressions, which, if they had been lasting, threatened the worst consequences to liberty. Mr. Sheridan's speech, on this occasion, deserves particular attention, although the motions with which it concluded were negatived by the ministry. Mr. (afterwards General Fitzpatrick) seconded the motion; and in the course of his speech remarked, that "if the military were to be employed against their fellow-citizens, without waiting for the orders of the civil power, he should no longer wish to belong to a profession so dangerous and fatal to the liberties of the country."

During 1777 and 1778 Mr. Sheridan had been a regular and important contributor to a paper conducted with great acrimony against administration, entitled "The Englishman;" Mr. Fox, Mr. Burke, General

Fitzpatrick, Lord John Townshend, and other distinguished characters, also wrote in it.

The latter nobleman was one of the earliest of Mr. Sheridan's political friends, and the sentiments entertained by his lordship are most feelingly expressed in the following extract of a letter addressed to a friend, stating the cause of his absence from Mr. Sheridan's funeral, and which arose from his lordship's own son being at the time in the most imminent danger:—"I am one of Mr. Sheridan's earliest friends. He, I, and poor Tickell (whose memory, with all his faults, will ever be dear to me) lived together in the closest habits of friendship from earliest life—long before Sheridan's introduction into public life—before "The Duenna's" appearance—before he was known to Fox, to whom I had the pleasure of first introducing him. I made the first dinner party at which they met; having told Fox that all the notions he might have conceived of Sheridan's talents and genius, from the comedy of "The Rivals," &c. would fall infinitely short of the admiration of his astonishing powers, which I was sure he would entertain at the first interview. This first interview between them (there were very few present, only Tickell and myself, and one or two more) I shall never forget. Fox told me, after our breaking up from dinner, that

he had always thought Hare (after my Uncle Charles Townshend) the wittiest man he ever met with, but that Sheridan surpassed them both infinitely. And Sheridan the next day told me, that he was quite lost in admiration of Fox—and that it was a puzzle to him to say, what he admired most—his commanding superiority of talent and universal knowledge, or his playful fancy, artless manners, and the benevolence of heart which shewed itself in every word he uttered. Ever afterwards we continued intimately and closely connected to the hour of his death, and nothing could give me a severer pang, than to have it supposed that I was remiss in my duties upon the last sad occasion."

In 1782, when a new administration was formed under the auspices of the Marquis of Rockingham, on whose public principles, and private honor and virtue, the nation seemed to repose, after the violent struggle by which it had been agitated with the securest and most implicit confidence, Mr. Sheridan's exertions, as a political writer, were recompensed with the appointment of Under Secretary to Mr. Fox, who had received the seals of the Foreign Department.

The public measures, for which the new minister stipulated with the court before he would consent to enter into any negotiations

for office, were these:—1st. Peace with the Americans, and the acknowledgment of their independence not to be a bar to the attainment of that object; 2nd. A substantial reform in the several branches of the civil list expenditure; 3rd. The diminution of the influence of the crown, under which article the bills for excluding contractors from seats in parliament, and disqualifying the revenue officers from voting in the election of members, were included.

While measures were happily pursuing for maturing and bringing forward plans of economy and reformation, for the security of the independence of parliament, for healing the breaches of the constitution, and relieving the burdens of the people; in the execution of which the present ministry stood pledged to the country; a heavy calamity was approaching, which darkened the prospect that had opened to the nation. This was the loss of the Marquis of Rockingham, whose health had been for some time gradually declining, and at length sunk under the increasing weight of public cares and business. The first step taken by the court, after his death, which happened on the 1st of July, 1782, was the appointment of the Earl of Shelburne to be his successor in the Treasury. This unexpected event was soon followed by the

resignation of Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, and the rest of the ministry; and the ever-memorable coalition having been formed, the talents of Mr. Sheridan were again devoted to literary hostilities against Lord Shelburne's administration.

It has been erroneously stated, however, in the Biographia Dramatica, and other publications, that Mr. Sheridan was a writer in the periodical paper called "The Jesuist:" he did not write a single paper of the eighteen numbers that were printed; but he was one of the advisers of the publication. Mr. Burke recommended the late Dr. Lawrence to conduct it, and that gentleman was the writer of the whole, from facts and hints with which he was supplied. It was stopped by a threatened prosecution after the above numbers had been published.

In a short time the coalition gained a decisive victory over the Shelburne administration; a negotiation was opened with the Duke of Portland, and on the 2d of April, 1783, a new administration was announced, in which Mr. Sheridan was appointed Secretary of the Treasury.

The extraordinary powers of reasoning evinced by Mr Sheridan in defence of Mr. Fox's celebrated India bill, equally astonished and delighted his audience and the public.

M—B.

On the rejection of that bill in the House of Lords, in December of the same year, the ministry, of which Mr. Sheridan was a member, was compelled to yield to another coalition; not, however, formed of two eminent leaders of opposite parties, but of the shreds and tatters of every party. Mr. Sheridan being again placed in the ranks of opposition, became constant and indefatigable in his support of the popular cause, and his abilities were dreaded as the never-failing scourge of the measures of his opponents.

In the violent debates which took place on the state of the country,* Mr. Sheridan exercised his satirical powers with the greatest success. In these discussions the most pointed personalities were cast and retorted from both sides of the house. The coalition was branded as a corrupt confederacy of two desperate factions, to seize upon the government of the country; and the India bill was foolishly represented to have been an experiment made by Mr. Fox, with a view, if not to place the crown on his own head, at least to raise himself to a degree of power superior to that of the sovereign. On the other hand, the party composing the new administration was described as a coalition, not indeed of parties, but of the shreds and remnants of

* Vol. I. pages 74 to 88.

the dregs and outcasts of parties; as a body collected for the purpose of fighting the battles of secret and unconstitutional influence,* of trampling on the power and dignity of the House of Commons; and of establishing a government of cabal, intrigue, and favouritism, and of destroying the very principles of laudable ambition, and honourable service in the state.

Mr. Sheridan on these occasions, attacked with the greatest severity, and at the same time with considerable poignancy of wit and humour, both Mr. Pitt and Mr. Dundas, (afterwards Lord Melville) the two leading members of administration.

In 1785 Mr. Sheridan had a principal share in the debates on the Irish Propositions.† He warmly contended, that circumstances did not justify the arrangement of ministers, whose schemes throughout the business had been delusion, trick, and fallacy. He compared the treatment of Ireland, newly escaped from harsh trammels and severe discipline, to that of a high mettled horse, hard to catch; whom the Irish Secretary was to soothe and coax with a sieve of provender in one hand, but be prepared with a bridle in the

* In allusion to the communications received from His Majesty, by Earl Temple and others.—Vide vol. I. page 73.

† Vol. I. page 141 to 182.

other, ready to slip over his head while snuffling at the food. Mr. Sheridan proved himself in these debates, perfectly master of the subject, and fully acquainted with the real interests of Ireland: his speeches on this occasion, were particularly remarkable for their depth, solidity, and force of argument. The ministry found them unanswerable by fair reasoning, and Mr. Pitt attempted to rebut them by the most acrimonious language of reproof; but this line of conduct produced from the latter, those retorts of keen satire, which never failed in silencing the person whose inconsiderate conduct provoked them. This was particularly noticed, when Mr. Pitt, in 1783, whilst prime minister of this kingdom, illiberally made allusions to Mr. Sheridan's employments, as manager of a theatre, and his dramatic pursuits; and recommended his reserving his talents for their proper stage.* Instead of being put out of temper by this attack, Mr. Sheridan met it with the greatest good humour, and by a happy thought, reduced the Premier of England to the angry boy in the Alchymist,† to the no small amuse-

* Vol. I. page 46.

† The singular felicity of this allusion to the character of Kastril, was noticed in the probationary odes for the laureatship. Lord Thurlow is there made, much in character, to exclaim,

"Damn Sheridan's wit,
The terror of Pitt."

ment of the opposition party, and of every admirer of gentlemanly satire.

Equally expert at a regular charge, or an unpremiditated reply, Mr. Sheridan had, at this period, rendered himself feared by the opponents of his colleagues, for that vigour of mind, extent of information, and brilliancy of eloquence and wit, which penetrated their concealed views, exposed their fallacies, and by unexpected flashes and retorts, never failed to overwhelm them with confusion, and expose them to the derision, not only of the house, but of the public.

In 1786, Mr. Sheridan vigorously opposed the motion of the minister, for erecting fortifications for the protection of the dock-yards, founded on a plan proposed by a board of officers. His speech,* on this measure, was the subject of much admiration; and indeed, independent of such arguments as are peculiar to itself, it comprehends every other which was made use of in contradiction to the proposed plan of fortifications. His objections to the system, were, first, such as went to shew, that it was, in itself, dangerous and inimical to the constitution; and secondly, that such were the nature and circumstances of the report made by the board of officers, that the

* Vol. I. page 197.

report itself did not warrant or authorize the system. The arguments with which Mr. Sheridan supported his objections, had full weight with the house, and on a division, the motion of the minister was rejected by the casting vote of the Speaker.

The proceedings against Mr. Hastings afforded Mr. Sheridan opportunities for the display of all his powers of eloquence. His speech * on the third charge against Mr. Hastings, viz. the resumption of the Jaghires, and the confiscation of the treasures of the Princesses of Oude, the mother and grandmother of the reigning Nabob will always be admired. And here it may not be improper to repeat the opinions, as stated in vol. I. of the most distinguished members of the house on this celebrated oration.

The subject of the charge was particularly fitted for displaying all the pathetic powers of eloquence, and never were they displayed with greater force, skill, and elegance. For five hours and a half Mr. Sheridan commanded the universal attention and admiration of the house (which, from the expectation of the day, was uncommonly crowded) by an oration of almost unexampled excellence; uniting the most convincing closeness and accuracy of ar-

* Feb. 7, 1787, Vol. I. p. 272.

gument, with the most luminous precision and perspicuity of language; and alternately giving force and energy to truth by solid and substantial reasoning; and enlightening the most extensive and involved subjects with the purest clearness of logic, and the brightest splendour of rhetoric.

Every prejudice, every prepossession, were gradually overcome by the force of this extraordinary combination of keen, but liberal discrimination—of brilliant, yet argumentative wit. So fascinated were the auditors by his eloquence, that when Mr. Sheridan sat down, the whole house, the members, peers, and strangers, involuntarily joined in a tumult of applause, and adopted a mode of expressing their approbation, new and irregular in the house, by loudly and repeatedly clapping with their hands.

Mr. Burke declared it to be the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument, and wit, united, of which there was any record or tradition.

Mr. Fox said, all that he had ever heard—all that he had ever read, when compared with it, dwindled into nothing, and vanished like vapour before the sun.

Mr. Pitt acknowledged, that it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient or modern times, and possessed every thing that genius or art

could furnish to agitate and controul the human mind.

The effects it produced were proportioned to its merits. After a considerable suspension of the debate, one of the friends of Mr. Hastings (Mr. Burgess) with some difficulty obtained, for a short time, a hearing; but finding the house too strongly affected by what they had heard to listen to him with favour, sat down again. Several members confessed they had come down strongly prepossessed in behalf of the person accused, and imagined nothing less than a miracle could have wrought so entire a revolution in their sentiments. Others declared, that though they could not resist the conviction that flashed upon their minds, yet they wished to have time to cool before they were called upon to vote; and though they were persuaded it would require another miracle to produce another change in their opinions, yet, for the sake of decorum, they thought it proper, that the debate should be adjourned. Mr. Fox and Mr. M. A. Taylor strongly opposed this proposition; contending, that it was not less absurd than unparliamentary to defer coming to a vote, for no other reason that had been alleged, than because the members were too firmly convinced; but Mr. Pitt concurring with the opinions of the former, the debate was adjourned a little after one o'clock.

In June, 1788, Mr. Sheridan summed up the evidence on the second, or Begum charge,* respecting the confinement and imprisonment of the Princesses of Oude, and the seizure of their treasures. This oration, which was delivered on the 3d,† 6th, 10th, and 13th of June,

* Vol. II. page 55 to 127.

† The opinion of Mr. Burke on these orations deserves notice:—On the 6th, Mr. Burgess, having moved in the house of commons, that the Solicitors employed by the managers of the prosecution should, from time to time, present at the bar of the house, an account of the expenses incurred, Mr. Burke said, that he rose neither to second nor to resist the motion. Before he seconded, he must approve a motion; before he opposed it, he must feel a strong reason for meeting it with his negative. In the present case, he felt no powerful propensity either way. He would not, however, avoid offering his warmest congratulations to the honourable gentleman, on his having chosen that glorious day, after the triumph of the morning, to bring forward a business of such an important nature! It was the honourable gentleman's choice of filling up the happy interval between their adjournment from Westminster Hall and the rising of the house, with calling them to the examination of the items of a Solicitor's bill, which alone was fit to follow his first onset within these walls, when he had stood up, and boldly ventured for a long time, singly and unseconded, to call for the attention of the house, after every other member had been struck dumb with astonishment and admiration at the wonderful eloquence of his honorable friend, Mr. Sheridan, who had that day again surprised the thousands who hung with rapture on his accents, by such a display of talents as were unparalleled in the annals of oratory, and as did the highest honour to himself, to that house, and to his country. For his part, Mr. Burke added, his mind was not sufficiently let down from the height of exultation to which it had been raised; it required a degree of bending, of wetting, and of relaxation, to sink his thoughts to the level of such an inquiry as that to which the honourable gentleman had called their attention. After such a sublime and glorious feast as the morning had afforded, the honourable gentleman's curious speculation on minute particulars, convinced him that Provi-

is beyond all praise. It enchanted every individual present, and established Mr. Sheridan the first orator of the age.

The conduct of the impeachment of Mr. Hastings was a task singularly arduous. Public opinion was in favor of Mr. Hastings,* and

dence had intended that man should not be proud, but that extasy of the mind should be checked and cooled by some sudden concomitant of mortification and disgrace, so that, under any circumstances, it should be impossible for a human being to escape long from having some proof of natural infirmity thrust before his sight. He again congratulated the honourable gentleman, therefore, on his choice of a day, declaring, that if ever there was a day made to dignify the nation, made to dignify human nature itself, it was that very day. Of all the various species of oratory, of every kind of eloquence that had been heard, either in ancient or in modern times; whatever the acuteness of the bar, the dignity of the senate, or the morality of the pulpit, could furnish, had not been equal to what that house had that day heard in Westminster Hall. No holy religionist, no man of any description as a literary character, could have come up, in the one instance, to the pure sentiments of morality, or in the other, to the variety of knowledge, force of imagination, propriety and vivacity of allusion, and strength of expression, to which they all that day had listened. From poetry up to eloquence, there was not a species of composition of which a complete and perfect specimen might not have been culled, from one part or the other of the speech to which he alluded, and which he was persuaded, had made too strong an impression on the minds of that house to be so soon obliterated, as to render such a coarse dish of slops as the honourable gentleman had set before them, at all palateable. There was, Mr. Burke added, no conquest of man over man, like that of genius over injustice; instead, therefore, of resolving themselves into a committee of petty accounts, they ought, like the Romans, after Scipio's victories, to go and thank the gods for that day's triumph, &c.

* Mr. Sheridan's opinion of the character of Mr. Hastings will be found particularly expressed in Vol. I. p. 287, 288, 326.

throughout, the greatest difficulties were opposed to the managers. The decided sanction given to the party arraigned, and the discountenance constantly shewn to the managers of the impeachment during its progress, by several of the judges; though, perhaps, in some degree consistent with the merciful spirit of the law of this country, were obstacles the managers could hardly be expected to surmount. The impeachment, however, opened a splendid theatre for literary fame, before an audience of the first dignity and splendour, between Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Burke: two individuals of the same country, (Ireland), the same nearly in point of genius, as well as birth, though each was marked by some peculiarities of character. They both possessed great variety of style as well as vigour of imagination. By the magic of their eloquence and poetical fancy, they could give animation to every object they might have occasion to describe; and where real objects failed, could call into existence a thousand airy nothings. As was said of the Italian poet Dante—

"*Il poeta dell' evidenza.*"*

They were taught by philosophy, that a degree of belief attends vivid conception; and that to arrest the attention of men, is a

* They were poets of evidence.

great step towards their conviction. Mr. Burke was, perhaps, richer in his various metaphors and allusions, as well as more lively in his transitions; but he mixed the serious too often with the low and the burlesque. Mr. Sheridan's muse was less desultory, and more equal in her flight; to him belonged every intellectual excellence—

"*Omne genus tetigit—nullum tetigit quod non ornavit.*"

But both* of them soared with epic freedom into the boundless regions of fancy, and made the most energetic appeals to the passions.

Here again Mr. Pitt† bowed to the superior eloquence of Mr. Sheridan, by moving an adjournment at the close of his (Mr. Sheridan's) speech; and stated, as his principal

* It has been remarked, that Mr. Sheridan, in flow of diction, yielded not to Mr. Pitt; in force and acuteness he might be compared to Mr. Fox; while, in splendour of imagination, he equalled Mr. Burke, and in its use and management, far excelled him. His sarcasms were finer, but less severe, than those by which Mr. Pitt indulged his anger, and the wit displayed by Mr. Sheridan in parliament was, perhaps, from the suavity of his temper, much less sharp than brilliant. But the quality which predominated over all its companions in the mind of Mr. Sheridan, was his exquisite and highly finished taste. In this rare talent he had no competitor; and that it was that gave such inimitable grace to his expressions; and which, in arguing or declaiming, in eulogy or invective, disposed his thoughts with an effect so full and admirable.

† Mr. Pitt, in speaking on the Declaratory East India Bill, 7th of March, 1788, vol. ii. p. 10, observed, "That in most of Mr. Sheridan's speeches there was much fancy; in many, shining wit; in others, very ingenious argument; in all, great eloquence," &c.

reason, that the house could not come then to an impartial decision, for they were still "under the wand of the enchanter."

In the debates* on the Regency, in the same year, 1788, the powers of Mr. Sheridan's eloquence were again called forth. He was the principal leader in the attempts to constitute, without restriction, the Prince of Wales, Regent; whose rights he supported with a dignity, not lessened by his accustomed ardour. In imposing restrictions, Mr. Sheridan conceived some delicacy was requisite, for every restriction that was not necessary, was not a limitation, but an insult. He attributed Mr. Pitt's haste to impose restrictions to the fear, or unworthy suspicion, that he could not carry the limitations he meant to propose, unless he were minister; or to the apprehension that parliament, or the Prince, would forget to do their duty; and he put these pointed questions to that minister.—"What provision was made, if the Prince should refuse to be Regent on the minister's terms?—Supposing him not to refuse, what reason had the house to believe he would withhold his consent from those restrictions when Regent, under which he would consent to accept the trust? Would any one advise him to say, I accept the Regency under the

* Vol. II. page 133 to 183.

limitations you propose, which I think are improper, and which I hope parliament will annul?"

The father of Mr. Sheridan died in the year 1788; and, in 1792, death also deprived him of his lady, of whom Mr. Wilkes said, she was "the most modest, pleasing, and delicate flower he had seen."

At its commencement, the French revolution was enthusiastically admired by Mr. Sheridan. He conceived it to be as just a revolution as our's, proceeding upon as sound a principle and a greater provocation, and vehemently defended the general views and conduct of the national assembly. At the same time he abhorred the cruelties that had been committed; from which, however, an awful lesson was to be gathered, which could not fail in creating an abhorrence of that accursed system of despotic government, which sets an example of depravity to the slaves it rules over.

Our own revolution, in 1688, Mr. Sheridan regarded as the glorious æra that gave real and efficient freedom to this country, and established, on a permanent basis, those sacred principles of government, and reverence for the rights of man, which he, for one, could not value here, without wishing to see them diffused throughout the world.

The alarm of danger, which had at this time been spread throughout the kingdom, not only to the public peace, but the constitution itself, began to yield to the means which were now employed to unfold and controul those practices by which it had been produced. It was said to have arisen from the principles of the rights of man, first propagated by the French, and since disseminated throughout this country; that under various pretences, but particularly that of parliamentary reform, clubs and societies were established, which met in various parts of the kingdom, and circulated the doctrines of the French constitution among the middle and lower classes of the people, to make them discontented with their government; that thus they hoped to prepare their minds for any attempt that might be hereafter made to overturn the government of the country. These circumstances had the effect of producing a change in the opposition party. Some of its supporters, and amongst them, Mr. Burke, imagining that this was a time of alarm and danger, when all party spirit should subside, when all party contentions should cease, and when men of all parties should unite to support the government, considered the external as well as internal enemies, to be of a species which had never been encountered; and that no weapon could so effec-

tually oppose their designs, as an unanimous and determined spirit of resistance.

Such was the general state of affairs, at the meeting of parliament, on the 13th of December, 1792. In His Majesty's speech* on that occasion, it was stated, that a design existed to attempt the destruction of our constitution, and the subversion of all order and government; and that this design had evidently been pursued in connection and concert with persons in foreign countries. Mr. Sheridan in opposing the address, which was an echo of His Majesty's speech, contended, that if there were, in reality, any seditious persons in this country, who wished to overturn the constitution, their numbers were as small as their designs were detestable. He accused ministers with having created the alarm, and strongly enforced the necessity of the house proceeding into an inquiry, respecting the circumstances which were alleged as the grounds of that alarm, before they proceeded any farther. Mr. Sheridan gave it as his firm opinion, that were one French soldier to land upon our coast, with the idea of effecting any change in our government, every hand and heart in the country would be fired by the indignity, and unite to oppose so insulting an attempt.

* For the substance of the speech—Vide page 37. vol. III.

In his speech* on Mr. Fox's motion for sending a minister to Paris, to treat with the provisional government of France, Mr. Sheridan successfully exercised that vein of prompted ridicule and sarcasm he had always at command. The opinions of Mr. Burke and Mr. Windham were criticised in the most masterly manner, and the declaration of a noble lord,† "that he was ashamed of the enthusiasm that he had once felt for Mr. Fox." Mr. Sheridan treated with the indignant zeal which friendship demanded; he observed, that the according chorus of the noble band,‡ who in spite of the efforts of clamour and power, surrounded the standard of Mr. Fox, "the champion of the constitution," testified how little they valued the desertion of this noble lord.

That magnanimous and humane spirit, which was such a distinguished feature in the character of Mr. Sheridan, induced him to be the first to call the attention of the House of Commons to a contemplation of the horrid and merciless catastrophe, with which the king and royal family of France were threatened,

* Page 42, vol. III. † Lord Sheffield.

‡ To the eternal credit of Mr. Sheridan, he continued firm to his first opinions and friendships, while inferior talents, with the recommendation of perfidy and political desertion alone, have met with the most ample rewards, and been fattened on the distresses of the public.

in order if possible to avert it. Mr. Sheridan suggested* an interposition on the part of the British government: and Mr Fox supported his friend's idea. The conversation, which the union of such eloquence rendered truly affecting, terminated in a motion, by Mr. Pitt, on the subject.

Mr. Sheridan's feelings, in regard to the unfortunate Lewis, were further witnessed by the house, after the death of the king, in the speech he made when he moved † for an address, praying that such communications as might have been received, as to the existence of seditious practices in this country, should be laid before a committee of the house. He therein animadverted on a declaration made in the house, ‡ that the only consolation that could arise from the death or murder of the king was, that it would rouse the indignation and animosity of mankind against France. This, Mr. Sheridan remarked, "was a consolation arising from inhumanity that he did not envy; he knew there were those who did not mourn that unhappy event: there were those who did not interest themselves to avert that misfortune. But those who loved freedom or cherished liberty, must ever deplore the transaction, because, by one act, they had armed

* Page 52, 53, 55, vol. III.

† Vol. III. p. 78 to 101. ‡ Vol. III. p. 86.

despotism, and given a fatal blow to the general interests of mankind."

In the debates on the continuation of the war with France, in January, 1794, Mr. Sheridan was a prominent speaker.* He shewed, that undue advantage was taken of the passions attached to human nature, in order to excite the indignation of the British public against the French, on account of the enormities they had committed in the course of the revolution. The guilt and infamy of their conduct, Mr. Sheridan admitted, no person could deny; but it only affected them, and no people had any other right than to lament the misfortunes of that country, without assuming, however, the least interference in its domestic affairs, unless by amicable mediation between the parties.—After reprobating at great length the coalition against France, Mr. Sheridan observed, that the junction of this country with the other powers of Europe, was the heaviest blow, in the opinion of the French, that they could have received. The English were the only people, since the revolution, for whom the French had avowed any esteem. It was of notoriety that they held all others in contempt, and therefore, much against their will, that they found themselves involved in a quarrel with this country. Referring next to the parade of disinte-

* Vide Vol. III. p. 182 to 222.

rested patriotism and vaunted sacrifices made by the ministry and their friends, he entered into a review of their conduct, and concluded with the following keen and pointed observations:—"Oh, shame! shame! is this a time for selfish intrigues, and the little dirty traffic for lucre and emolument? Does it suit the honor of a gentleman to ask at such a moment? Does it become the honesty of a minister to grant? Is it intended to confirm the pernicious doctrine so industriously propagated by many, that all public men are impostors, and that every politician has his price? Or even where there is no principle in the bosom, why does not prudence hint to the mercenary and the vain to abstain, for a while at least, and wait the fitting of the times? Improvident impatience! nay, even from those who seem to have no direct object of office or profit, what is the language which their actions speak? The throne is in danger! we will support the throne; but let us share the smiles of royalty: the order of nobility is in danger! I will fight for nobility, says the Viscount, but my zeal would be much greater, if I were made an Earl. Rouse all the Marquess within me, exclaims the Earl, and the peerage never turned forth a more undaunted champion in its cause than I shall prove. Stain my green riband blue, cries out the Illustrious Knight, and the

fountain of honor will have a fast and faithful servant. What are the people to think of our sincerity? What credit are they to give to our professions? Is this system to be persevered in?" *

On the 17th March, 1794, a warm debate took place in the House of Commons, respecting a requisition issued by the ministry, under the name of a recommendation for the raising of volunteer companies of horse and foot, in order to preserve internal peace, and suppress domestic insurrections; and to aid the military, if necessary, to repel an invading enemy. The measure was condemned by the opposition as unconstitutional; and the voluntary subscriptions proposed to support it, were in particular declared unlawful, without the specific consent of the legislature. In the subsequent discussion, on the 21st March, Mr. Sheridan demanded, whether the recommendation proceeded from the Secretary of State? and in case it did, that it should be communicated to the house, which ought of course to be apprised of it, as it related to the levying of troops and money. The reply was, that the recommendation was no more than a method adopted by ministry to direct it in the formation of a plan to be presented to the house as soon as proper estimates of the expense had

* Vol. III. p. 215.

been regularly made out. Letters having been written by government to the lieutenants of the several counties on the subject, Mr. Sheridan requested they should be produced: but this being refused, he gave notice he would move the house to declare its disapprobation of the measure. The minister, in answer to this, asserted, that it was founded on precedent; and that money thus raised, had, in various instances, been expended in the support of troops, as it was proposed in the present case. Pursuant to his notice, Mr. Sheridan resumed this business on the 24th of March, and moved for the papers; but the question being put, it was carried in favor of ministry.

On the 28th of the same month, Mr. Sheridan moved, in an animated address * to the house, that it was dangerous and unconstitutional for the people of this country to make any loan of money to parliament. In reply, the letters written by the Marquess of Lansdowne, then Lord Shelburne, while in office, to the lieutenants of counties, in 1782, were cited, as a case precisely similar to the present; Mr. Windham vehemently supported his opinion, and observed, that the opposition of the present day resembled that of the year 1745; which, to favour the cause of the Pretender,

* Vol. III. p. 285.

declared the country was in no danger. These assertions produced a most satirical and pointed censure from Mr. Sheridan. He recalled to Mr. Windham's remembrance the vehemence with which he used to inveigh against the present minister; and spoke with the greatest severity of his direliction of the minority. There were, Mr. Sheridan observed, some fundamental principles which no man could be justified in forsaking:—to grant no supplies to the crown, but through parliament, was the essential part of the constitution:—to relinquish this privilege, was to empower the crown at once to corrupt parliament, and subvert liberty. The debate was concluded with a majority of 170 for the previous question.

To minutely follow Mr. Sheridan through his political career from this period, would swell this work to another volume; we must now therefore, content ourselves with a few observations on two or three particular points, and refer the reader to the speeches themselves: they are the strongest evidence of Mr. Sheridan's unremitting exertions in support of the constitution of his country; as well as of the splendour of his genius, which will shed a lustre upon the age in which he lived, to the remotest posterity.

Mr. Sheridan has the credit of having, on

the mutiny at the Nore,* especially contributed to save the state. Although in opposition he was complimented by the ministry for the "fair, candid, and liberal conduct he adopted in this business."

His speech,† in the debate on the army estimates for 1803, obtained much commendation. He endeavoured to persuade all sides, that there never was a crisis in which it was more necessary, than at that moment, to prove to the people of England, that they were above all party feelings—all party distinctions, and superior to any petty scramble for places or power. Mr. Canning, on this occasion, observed, that the sentiments of Mr. Sheridan "were worthy the man who had so often come forward in times of public embarrassment, as the champion of the country's rights and interests, and had rallied the hearts and spirits of the nation; he only regretted, that such a speech had not come from the mouth of a minister. Such language from those in administration, would, in his opinion, do more than fleets and armies to ward off the attack of a foreign enemy, and to animate and maintain the spirit and energy of the people."

A portion of this eloquent speech, produced an effect very different from the conclusions

* Vide Vol. IV. p. 397 to 409. † Vol. V. p. 209.

of Mr. Sheridan. It was, as has been observed, designed to quell all party feelings; but in the playfulness of that wit and fancy, which he always commanded, he fastened a degree of personal ridicule on the Premier, Lord Sidmouth, then Mr. Addington, the effects of which long remained. Some supposed resemblance in the deportment of his Lordship, to that which common consent has usually attached exclusively to the professors of medicine, coinciding with the circumstance of his being the son of the eminent physician of the same name, had procured him, partially, the familiar appellation of "The Doctor." Mr. Sheridan, in the course of his speech, not content with holding up ministers to view as the "lees of a bottle of tokay, on which some had been forward to make it pass for genuine;"—one as a "mere goose-quill,"—another as "a stick of sealing-wax, which, as soon as the drudgery of signing the peace was over, were to be considered as *functi officiis*, and thrown aside"—allusions which were quickly caught, and kept the house in continual laughter—took occasion, in stating the personal dislike of some gentlemen to Mr. Addington, to quote Martial's epigram,

"*Non amo te, Sabide, nec possum dicere quare;*
Hoc tantum possum dicere, non amo te."

Of which he said, the English parody would be more applicable to the parties,

"*I do not like thee,* Doctor *Fell,*" &c.

The particular emphasis which he laid on the word *doctor*, and his subsequent repetition of it, occasioned it to be constantly applied; and thenceforward the minister was generally distinguished by the appellation of "*the Doctor.*" The public prints, in the interest of his opponents, re-echoed the title, and twisted and tortured it into every species of allusion that wit and humour could bring to bear upon the man and his measures, and held them up to that ridicule which is always fatal and destructive to public character and confidence.

In 1808, when the early burst of Spanish patriotism had raised a strong sympathy throughout Great Britain, Mr. Sheridan was the first to give form and expression to the feelings which swelled every English breast. He was convinced, that since the first burst of the French Revolution, there never existed so happy an opportunity for this country to strike a bold stroke for the rescue of the world; he therefore recommended, that the patriotic and enthusiastic ardour of the Spaniards should be met with corresponding energy and enthusiasm; and, observed Mr. Sheridan, if that

vigorous interference took place, "the administration should have from him as cordial and as sincere a support, as if the man* whom he most loved were restored to life and power."

On the death of Mr. Pitt, Mr. Sheridan came into administration with his friend Mr. Fox. He was appointed a Privy Councillor and Treasurer of the Navy; and in the latter situation he continued till after the death of that great statesman. Shortly after a difference arose in the cabinet on the subject of the Catholic claims, which occasioned a dissolution of parliament, and placed Mr. Sheridan once more in the ranks of opposition, where he continued for the remainder of the period he held a seat in parliament.

After the death of Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan contested the representation in parliament of the second city in the empire, and was returned. On the dissolution of parliament in 1807, he again became a candidate for Westminster, but was unsuccessful.

Mr. Sheridan's talents, as an orator, may always be estimated by his speeches now recorded, many of which are master-pieces of eloquence, and replete with the most beautiful effusions of fancy, wit, humour, and sympathy. It has been justly summed up by

* Mr. Fox.

several political characters, and with the opinion of some we fully accord.

Mr. Sheridan was calculated to shine in every sphere; wherever he appeared—in the senate, in the theatre, or in the seat of conviviality, he monopolized a large portion of admiration; he, to adopt the words of one friend, possessed strength without coarseness; liveliness without frivolity; he was bold but dexterous in his attacks—not easily repelled, but when repelled effecting his retreat in good order; often severe, much oftener witty and gay, and graceful; disentangling what was confused; enlivening what was dull; very clear in his arrangements; very comprehensive in his views; flashing upon his hearers with such a burst of brilliancy!—When no other speaker was listened to, he could arrest and chain down the members to their seats—all hanging upon him with the most eager attention—all fixed in wonder and delight; he never tired; he could adapt himself more than any other man to all minds and to all capacities—

"From grave to gay, from lively to severe."

Every quality of an orator was united in him; the mind, the eye, quick, sparkling, penetrating, matchless almost for brilliancy and expression—the attitude, the gesture, the voice.

Mr. Sheridan was invariably the friend of public liberty and the freedom of the press;—when they were attacked he stood forth their ardent, uniform, and sincere champion; and his exertions, in their cause, together with the firmness of his political connection, procured him a great share of popular favor. His just constitutional principles are so evident in almost all his speeches, that it would be difficult to select one in particular. We cannot, however, but notice, at a moment like the present, his conclusion of an able speech on the supply of 1793, and which we wish was impressed on the mind of every individual in parliament. Mr. Sheridan recommended to the house, "before they laid a new burden of a single shilling on the people, to enable themselves, by a rigorous scrutiny into all useless places, and reversionary sinecures, to look their constituents in the face, and assure them, that before they applied to their pockets they had abolished all unnecessary expenses, and unmerited stipends. By doing this they would not only bring to the public service large sums, wrung from the industry and labour of the community, but they would destroy the baits of corruption, and teach the government to look to its merits for its support."*

* Vol. III. p. 104.

Mr. Sheidan's second wife, and widow, was the youngest daughter of the Rev. Newton Ogle, Dean of Winchester; and with her fortune he purchased the estate of Polsden, in Surrey; and soon after this event he was appointed by the Prince of Wales Receiver-General of the Duchy of Cornwall, which situation he held during the remainder of his life.

In private life Mr. Sheridan was as much esteemed as genuine and unbounded wit, exhaustless good humour, and the singular and happy faculty of accommodating himself to every taste and every disposition, could make a man:—his company was universally courted; it enlivened the dull, gave confidence to the bashful, exhilirated melancholy, and gave the highest zest to gaiety and pleasure.

His death, which took place at twelve o'clock at noon of the 7th of July, 1816, was occasioned by a disease in the stomach, that had been gradually aggravating for some time previous to that event, until at length this organ became incapable of performing its functions; and within the last two or three days of his life the power of deglutition was so completely destroyed, that it was deemed dangerous to put any food into his mouth lest it should produce suffocation. He was confined to his bed for some months, during which he was frequently delirious, from the

sensorium being affected, when he was unable to take any food. The last four years of his life had been passed in seclusion from the political world; and during that time he had, it is deeply to be regretted, to struggle hard against the severest pecuniary embarrassments.

We shall close this sketch of a man whose talents must always be a theme for admiration, with a list of the friends who attended his funeral; from which it will be observed, that men of all parties concurred in paying this testimony of respect to the last remains of him with whom most of them had lived in habits of intimacy, and by whose delightful powers they had been so often charmed, both in public and in private.

Mr. Sheridan was interred in the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, near to the bodies of Addison, Garrick, and Cumberland. It was decided that the corpse should be followed to the grave by his friends on foot; and it was consequently removed from the residence of the family in Saville-row to the house of Mr. Peter Moore, in Great George-street, who was the warm and constant friend of the deceased, that the procession on foot to the Abbey might thereby be rendered more practicable.

THE PALL-BEARERS WERE,

The Duke of Bedford,
Earl Mulgrave,
Lord Holland,
The Earl of Lauderdale,
Bishop of London,
Lord Robert Spencer.

Chief Mourner—Charles B. Sheridan, Esq.

Henry Ogle, Esq.
Hon. E. Bouverie,
William Linley, Esq.
Henry Streatfield, Esq.
Sir Charles Asgill, Bt.
C. W. Ward, Esq.

in Mourning Cloaks.

THEN FOLLOWED—

H. R. H. The Duke of York,
Duke of Argyle,
Earl of Thanet,
Earl of Harrington,
Earl of Mexborough,
Earl of Yarmouth,
Viscount Sidmouth,
Lord Rivers,
Lord Lynedoch,
Rt. Hon. W. Wellesley Pole,
Hon. W. Lambe,
Hon. W. Ponsonby,
Hon. Lieut.-Gen. Phipps,
Sir Thos. Mostyn,
Sir E. Home,
Sir Samuel Romilly,
Colonel Hughes,
M. A. Taylor, Esq.
Hon. Captain Bennett,
Robert Adair, Esq.
John Taylor Vaughan, Esq.
W. J. Dennison, Esq.
John Hobhouse, Esq.
Scrope Davies, Esq.
——— Metcalfe, Esq.
——— Grey, Esq.
B. Williams, Esq.
M. Wyatt, Esq.
— Bradley, Esq.
— Burgess, Esq.
H. R. H. The Duke of Sussex,
Marquess of Anglesey,
Earl Clare,
Earl of Bessborough,
Earl of Rosslyn,
Lord George H. Cavendish,
Viscount Granville,
Lord Erskine,
Rt. Hon. George Canning,
Hon. L. Stanhope,
Hon. T. Brande,
Hon. D. Kinnaird,
The Lord Mayor,
Sir Ronald Ferguson,
Sir A. Pigott,
Sir B. Bloomfield,
Owen Williams, Esq.
Peter Moore, Esq.
Dr. Baine,
Samuel Rogers, Esq.
Samuel Smith, Esq.
Samuel Talbot, Esq.
A. Graham, Esq.
Richard Wilson, Esq.
James Perry, Esq.
George Lane, Esq.
Rev. C. Williams
B. Wyatt, Esq.
——— Rae, Esq.
——— Peat, Esq.
——— Dunn, Esq.

&c. &c. &c.

The Duke of Wellington, the Marquesses of Wellesley,* Headfort, Tavistock, and Douglas; Lord Guilford, Lord A. Hamilton, Lord Duncannon, Lord Petersham, Sir Thos. Stepney, were prevented from attending, by absence from London, or indisposition.

* Among the various attributes of affectionate respect paid to the memory of Mr. Sheridan, the following letter from the Marquess of Wellesley was addressed to the Earl of Lauderdale, in answer to the request that the noble Lord would attend the funeral:—

"*East Cliff Lodge, Thursday, July 10th*, 1816.

"MY DEAR LORD,

"I return you my sincere thanks for the trouble which you have had the goodness to take in communicating to me Mrs. Sheridan's very flattering wish, that I should attend the funeral of the late Mr. Sheridan. The same kind disposition will, I trust, induce your Lordship not to decline the office of expressing to Mrs. Sheridan my grateful sense of this most acceptable mark of distinction: however unworthy of such an honor, I am at least capable of appreciating it. No person could entertain more admiration of Mr. Sheridan's talents, more respect for his eminent public merits, or more regard for his amiable character in private society: although I had the misfortune often to differ with him in political life, I received many testimonies of his favourable opinion, which are now most valuably confirmed by Mrs. Sheridan's distinguished notice.

"With these sentiments, I must feel a particular anxiety to avail myself of the opportunity, which your Lordship's obliging letter presents, of manifesting my respect for Mr. Sheridan's memory, but I am unfortunately compelled to remain at this place to-morrow and Saturday on indispensable business. If the funeral should be delayed until Monday, I could attend it; and I would, with the greatest readiness, go to London on Sunday for that purpose.

"If, however, the arrangements already made should be unalterable, I request your Lordship to assure Mrs. Sheridan of my unfeigned solicitude to concur zealously and actively in every public and private tribute of affectionate respect to the memory of a person, whose genius was an ornament to his country, and whose conversation was the delight of private society.

"So deeply do I feel the distinction of being considered among the

The following is an inscription, on a large blue flag stone, placed over the grave of Mr. Sheridan, by his friend, Mr. Moore:—

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN,

BORN 1751;

DIED 7th JULY, 1816;

THIS MARBLE IS THE TRIBUTE OF HIS ATTACHED

FRIEND,

PETER MOORE.

---

number of Mr. Sheridan's friends, that if I should be deprived of the honor of attending his remains to Westminster Abbey, your Lordship cannot confer a greater obligation on me, than by communicating to the public my sentiments on this occasion.

(Signed) "WELLESLEY."

"Earl of Lauderdale, &c. &c."

"P. S. If the funeral should happen to be delayed, may I request a note from your Lordship by return of post?" W.

EPILOGUE

To the Tragedy of Semiramis;

By R. B. Sheridan.

Dishevell'd still, like Asia's bleeding Queen,
Shall I with jests deride the tragic scene?
No, beauteous mourners!—from whose downcast eyes—
The Muse has drawn her noblest sacrifice!
Whose gentle bosoms, Pity's altars—bear
The crystal incense of each falling tear!—
There lives the Poet's praise! no critic art
Can match the comment of a feeling heart!

When gen'ral plaudits speak the fable o'er—
Which mute attention had approv'd before;
Tho' ruder spirits love accustom'd jest,
Which chases sorrow from the vulgar breast,
Still hearts refin'd their sadden'd tint retain—
The sigh is pleasure! and the jest is pain!—
Scarce have they smiles, to honor grace, or wit,
Tho' Roscius spoke the verse himself had writ.
Thus tho' the time, when vernal fruits receive
The grateful show'rs that hang on April's eve;
Tho' every coarser stem of forest birth
Throws with the morning beam its dews to earth,
Ne'er does the gentle Rose revive so soon,
But, bath'd in Nature's tears, it droops till noon.

O could the Muse one simple moral teach!
From scenes like these, which all who heard might reach.
Thou child of sympathy—whoe'er thou art,
Who with Assyria's Queen has wept thy part;—
Go search, where keener woes demand relief,
Go—while thy heart yet beats with fancy'd grief;
Thy lip still conscious of the recent sigh,
The graceful tear still lingering in thy eye;—
Go—and on real misery bestow
The bless'd effusion of fictitious woe!

So shall our Muse, supreme of all the nine,
Deserve, indeed, the title of——divine.
Virtue shall own her favor'd from above,
And Pity—greet her—with a sister's love.

PROLOGUE

To the Comedy of the Miniature Picture;

BY R. B. SHERIDAN.

CHILL'D by rough gales, while yet reluctant May
Withholds the beauties of the vernal day;
As some fond Maid, whom Matron frowns reprove,
Suspends the smile her heart devotes to love:
The Seasons' pleasures too delay their hour,
And Winter revels with protracted power:
Then blame not, Critics, if thus late, we bring
A Winter's drama—but reproach—the Spring.
What prudent Cit dares yet the season trust,
Bask in his whiskey, and enjoy the dust?
Hors'd in Cheapside, scarce yet the gayer spark
Achieves the Sunday triumph of the Park;
Scarce yet you see him, dreading to be late,
Scour the New-Road, and dash through Grosvenor-gate.
Anxious—and fearful to—his steed to shew,
The hack'd Bucephalus of Rotten-row!
Careless he seems, yet, vigilantly sly,
Woos the stray glance of ladies passing by,
While his off heel, insidiously aside,
Provokes the caper which he seems to chide:
Scarce rural Kensington due honor gains,
The vulgar verdure of her walk remains,
Where white-rob'd Misses amble two by two,
Nodding to booted beaux—"How do, how do?"
With generous questions that no answer wait,
"How vastly full!—a'n't you come vastly late?
Isn't it quite charming? when do you leave town?
A'n't you quite tir'd? pray can we set you down?"

These superb pleasures of a London May,
Imperfect yet, we hail the cold delay;
But if this plea's denied, in our excuse
Another still remains you can't refuse;
It is a Lady writes—and hark!—a noble Muse,
But see a Critic starting from his bench—
"A noble Author"—Yes, Sir; but the Play's not French:
Yet if it were, no blame on us could fall,
For we, you know, must follow Fashion's call,
And true it is things lately were *en train*
To woo the Gallic Muse at Drury-lane;
Not to import a troop of foreign elves,
But treat you with French actors—in ourselves:
A friend we had, who vow'd he'd make us speak
Pure flippant French,—by contract—in a week;
Told us 'twas time to study what was good,
Polish, and leave off being understood;
That crowded audiences we thus might bring
To Monsieur Parsons, and Chevalier King:
Or should the vulgars grumble now and then,
The Prompter might translate—for country gentlemen,
Straight all subscrib'd—Kings, Gods, Mutes, Singer, Actor,—
A Flanders figure-dancer our contractor.
But here, I grieve to own, tho't be to you,
He acted—e'en as most contractors do;
Sold what he never dealt in, and th' amount
Being first discharg'd, submitted his account:
And what th' event? their industry was such,
Dodd spoke good Flemish, Bannister bad Dutch.
Then the rogue told us, with insulting ease,
So it was foreign, it was sure to please:
Beaux, wits, applaud, as fashion should command,
And Misses laugh—to seem to understand—
So from each clime our soil may something gain;
Manhood from Rome, and sprightliness from Spain;
Some Russian Roscius next delight the age,
And a Dutch Heinel skait along the stage.

Exotic fopperies, hail! whose flattering smile
Supplants the sterner virtues of our isle!
Thus, while with Chinese firs and Indian pines
Our nurseries swarm, the British oak declines:
Yet, vain our Muses fear—no foreign laws
We dread, while native beauty pleads our cause:
While you're to judge, whose smiles are honor's higher
Than verse should gain, but where those eyes inspire.
But if the men presume your pow'r to awe,
Retort their churlish senatorial law;
This is your house—and move—the gentlemen withdraw:
Then you may vote, with envy never ceasing,
Your influence has increas'd, and is increasing;
But there, I trust, the resolutions finish'd;
Sure none will say—it ought to be diminish'd.

STANZAS;

By R. B. Sheridan.

Ask'st thou, "how long my love shall stay,
"When all that's new is past?"
How long? Ah, Delia! can I say
How long my life will last?
Dry be that tear—be hush'd that sigh;
At least, I'll love thee till I die.

And does that thought affect thee too
The thought of Damon's death;
That he who only lives for you,
Must yield his faithful breath?
Hush'd be that sigh, be dry that tear,
Nor let us lose our heaven here!

EXTRACT

From a Monody to the Memory of Mr. Garrick;

By R. B. Sheridan.

Amid the arts which seek ingenuous fame,
Our toil attempts the most precarious claim!
To him, whose mimic pencil wins the prize,
Obedient Fame immortal wreaths supplies:
Whate'er of wonder Reynolds now may raise,
Raphael still boasts cotemporary praise:
Each dazzling light, and gaudier bloom subdued,
With undiminished awe his works are viewed:
E'en beauty's portrait wears a softer prime,
Touched by the tender hand of mellowing time.

The patient sculptor owns an humbler part,
A ruder toil, and more mechanic art;
Content with slow and timorous stroke to trace
The lingering line, and mould the tardy grace:
But once achieved—tho' barbarous wreck o'erthrow
The sacred fane, and lay its glories low,
Yet shall the sculptur'd ruin rise to day,
Grac'd by defect, and worship'd in decay;
Th' enduring record bears the artist's name,
Demands his honors, and asserts his fame.
Superior hopes the Poet's bosom fire—
O proud distinction of the sacred lyre!—
Wide as th 'inspiring Phœbus darts his ray,
Diffusive splendor gilds his votary's lay.
Whether the song heroic woes rehearse,
With epic grandeur, and the pomp of verse;
Or, fondly gay, with unambitious guile
Attempt no prize but favoring beauties smile;
Or bear dejected to the lonely grove
The soft despair of unprevailing love,—
Whate'er the theme—thro' ev'ry age and clime
Congenial passions meet th' according rhyme;

The pride of glory—pity's sigh sincere—
Youth's earliest blush—and beauty's virgin tear,
Such is *their* meed—*their* honors thus secure,
Whose arts yield objects, and whose works endure.
The *actor* only, shrinks from times award;
Feeble tradition is *his* memory's guard;
By whose faint breath his merits must abide,
Unvouch d by proof—to substance unallied!
Ev'n matchless Garrick's art, to heaven resign'd,
No fixed effect, no model leaves behind!

The *grace* of *action*—the adapted *mien*
Faithful as nature to the varied scene;
Th' *expressive glance*—whose subtle comment draws
Entranc'd attention, and a mute applause;
Gesture that marks, with force and feeling fraught,
A sense in silence, and a will in thought;
Harmonious speech, whose pure and liquid tone
Gives verse a music scarce confess'd its own;
As light from gems assumes a brighter ray,
And cloath'd with orient hues, transcends the day!
Passion's wild break—and frown that awes the sense,
And every *charm* of gentler *Eloquence*—
All perishable!—like the electric fire
But strike the frame—and as they strike expire;
Incense too pure a bodied flame to bear,
Its fragrance charms the sense, and blends with air.

LINES

On the Death of Mr. Sheridan;

BY CHANDOS LEIGH, ESQ.

WELL might the Comic Muse with drooping head
Heave the deep sigh—her Sheridan is dead.—
The sisters mourn for him, whose master-mind
Each separate talent in itself combin'd,

Wit, Eloquence, and Poetry, the fame
Of either had immortaliz'd his name!
O could the Muse's skill but match her zeal,
Then might the mournful lay like his appeal
To British hearts, like his when Garrick died;
Then glow'd the verse to sympathy allied!
Each word with plaintive sweetness charm'd the ear,
As flowers exhale a fragrance o'er the bier.
Where is the mourner now—whose bosom bled
For kindred genius gone?—he too is dead.

Turn to the scenes of mimic life, there view
The characters our young Menander drew;
Caprice in all her wayward fits display'd,
Folly in all her nicer shades pourtray'd;
The testiness of age, the soldier's sense,
The maiden's sweet discourse, love's eloquence;
The lively wife, not quite by fashion spoil'd,
The smooth artificer of mischief foil'd;
The generous rake, for, lingering near his heart,
His better genius would not yet depart;
These, true to nature, still adorn our stage,
Or in his calm retreat amuse the sage;
These, like the gems of rarer worth, are priz'd,
When those of transient value are despis'd.
In senates, there his talents shone confest,
As wit delighted, passion storm'd the breast—

The mind with taste, sense, judgment, feeling, fraught,
Seem'd to be bless'd by more than human thought—
Hence burning words, for freedom gave the choice;
The lightning of his eye—the magic of his voice.

When social mirth beam'd forth in every eye
His was the lively jest—the keen reply,
The flow of soul, wit seasoned high the song,
As playful fancy drove old time along.

As glides a solemn stream by some dark grove
Of cypress trees, that mournful sign above;
Following his lov'd remains, the good and great,
Marched sadly onwards in funereal state
To that proud scene, were patriots, poets lie;
(Sacred their dust—their fame shall never die)
There last not least, our Sheridan was laid,
There, weeping friendship her sad tribute paid.

Ye noble few, whose memories ponder o'er
His cheerful smile—his wit's unfailing store;
Bright to the last, how graceful are your tears,
They tell of what he was in happier years.—
The friend, whose genius shed its vivid ray,
Far from your hearts to drive life's cares away—
The gay companion, sharers in whose mirth,
You had forgot that sorrow dwelt on earth.

Ye fair, who knew his elegance of mind,
His soul, still breathing in the verse refin'd;
His purity of heart t'wards her he loved,
Her fondness, by the bitterest trial proved,
While in your heart, the kind affections live,
His faults, whate'er they were, you must forgive.

And you, you all, whom many a sprightly scene,
Waking applause shall teach what he has been.—
Who shall revere the patriot—love the bard—
From Envy's blight, his sacred memory guard!
While glory aiding round his cold, pale urn,
By fancy watch'd, shall undefiled burn.

LINES

On the Death of Mr. Sheridan,

ATTRIBUTED TO

THOMAS MOORE, ESQ.

YES, grief will have way—but the fast-falling tear
Shall be mingled with deep execrations on those,
Who could bask in that Spirit's meridian career,
And yet leave it thus lonely and dark at its close:—

Whose vanity flew round him, only while fed
By the odour his fame in its summer-time gave—
Whose vanity now with quick scent for the dead,
Re-appears—like a vampire, to feed at his grave!

Oh! it sickens the heart, to see bosoms so hollow,
And spirits so mean in the great and high born;
To think what a long line of titles may follow,
The relics of him who died—friendless and lorn;

How proud they can press to the fun'ral array,
Of him, whom they shunn'd in his sickness and sorrow;—
How Bailiffs may seize, his last blanket to-day.
Whose pall shall be held up by nobles, to-morrow!

"Was *this* then the fate,"—future ages will say,
When *some* names shall live but in history's curse;
When truth will be heard, and these Lords of a day,
Be forgotten as fools, or remembered as worse;—

"Was this then the fate of that high-gifted man,
"The pride of the palace, the bower, and the hall,
"The orator—dramatist—minstrel—who ran
"Through each mode of the lyre, and was master of all!

" Whose mind was an essence compounded with art
" From the finest and best of all other men's powers;
" Who ruled like a wizard, the world of the heart,
" And could call up its sunshine, or bring down its showers!

" Whose humour, as gay as the fire-fly's light,
" Play'd round every subject, and shone as it play'd;—
" Whose wit in the combat as gentle as bright
" Ne'er carried a heart-stain away on its blade;—

" Whose eloquence—bright'ning whatever it tried,
" Whether reason or fancy, the gay or the grave,—
" Was as rapid, as deep, and as brilliant a tide,
" As ever bore Freedom aloft on its wave!"

Yes, such was the man, and so wretched his fate;—
And thus, sooner or later, shall all have to grieve,
Who waste their morn's dew in the beams of the Great,
And expect 'twill return to refresh them at eve!

In the woods of the North, there are insects that prey,
On the brain of the Elk till his very last sigh; *
Oh Genius! thy patrons, more cruel than they,
First feed on thy brains, and then leave thee to die!

* " Naturalists have observed that, upon dissecting an elk, there was found in its head some large flies, with its brain almost eaten away by them."—History of Poland.

MONODY ON Mr. SHERIDAN;

Attributed to the Honorable W. Lambe.

SPOKEN AT DRURY-LANE THEATRE.

When the last sunshine of expiring day
In summer's twilight weeps itself away,
Who hath not felt the softness of the hour
Sink on the heart—as dew along the flower?
Who hath not shared that calm so still and deep,
The voiceless thought that would not speak but weep,
A holy concord—and a bright regret,
A glorious sympathy with suns that set?
So feels the fulness of our heart and eyes
When all of genius which can perish—dies.

The flash of Wit—the bright Intelligence,
The beam of Song—the blaze of Eloquence,
Set with the Sun—but still have left behind
The enduring produce of immortal mind,
Fruits of a genial morn, and glorious noon,
A deathless part of him who died too soon.
From the charmed council—to the festive board
Of human feelings the unbounded lord,
In whose acclaim the loftiest voices vied,
The praised—the proud—who made his praise their pride:
*When the loud cry of trampled Hindostan
Arose to Heaven in her appeal from man,

* See Fox, Burke, and Pitt's eulogy on Mr. Sheridan's Speech on the charges exhibited against Mr. Hastings in the House of Commons. Mr. Pitt entreated the house to adjourn, to give time for a calmer consideration of the question than could then occur after the immediate effect of that oration.

His was the thunder—his the avenging rod,
The wrath—the delegated voice of God!
Which shook the nations through his lips—and blazed
Till vanquished senates trembled as they praised.

And here, oh! here, where yet all young and warm
The gay creations of his spirit charm,
The matchless dialogue—the deathless wit
Which knew not what it was to intermit,
The glowing portraits fresh from life that bring
Home to our hearts the truth from which they spring,
Here in their first abode to-night you meet
Bright with the hues of his Promethean heat,
A halo of the light of other days
Which still the splendor of its orb betrays.

But should there be to whom the fatal blight
Of failing Wisdom yields a base delight,
Men who exult when minds of heavenly tone
Jar in the music which was born their own,
Still let them pause—Ah! little do they know
That what to them seemed vice might be but woe.
Hard is his fate on whom the public gaze
Is fixed for ever to detract or praise,
Repose denies her requiem to his name,
And Folly loves the martyrdom of Fame.

But far from us and from our mimic scene
Such things should be—if such have ever been;
Ours be the gentlier wish, the kinder task,
To give the tribute Glory need not ask,
To mourn the vanished beam—and add our mite
Of praise in payment of a long delight.

Ye Orators! whom yet our councils yield,
Mourn for the veteran hero of your field!

The worthy rival of the wondrous *Three!**
Whose words were sparks of immortality!
Ye Bards! to whom the Drama's Muse is dear,
He was your master—emulate him *here!*
Ye men of wit and social eloquence!
He was your brother—bear his ashes hence!
While powers of mind almost of boundless range
Complete in kind—as various in their change,
While Eloquence—Wit—Poesy—and Mirth
That humbler harmonist of care on earth,
Survive within our souls—while lives our sense
Of pride in Merit's proud pre-eminence,
Long shall we seek his likeness—long in vain,
And turn to all of him which may remain,
Sighing that Nature formed but one such man,
And broke the die—in moulding Sheridan!

* Fox—Pitt—Burke.

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